

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not in ANY WAY hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.

THE FLY PERIL.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—At the present time the "Fly Peril," both at home and abroad, seems one of the gravest dangers with which we are confronted, yet no special skill is needed, at home at any rate, to deal with it. Attention to detail, regularity, the careful following out of instructions alone are necessary as well, of course, as a realization of the peril, and a belief in the value of the means taken to combat it. These are the factors which arouse enthusiasm and therefore command success.

Abroad the problem is not so simple. I wonder if you have read this extract from a man at the front to his mother, published in the *Times* :—

"Soon life will be quite unbearable and there will be any amount of disease spread by the flies. The authorities are awfully slack about it. They ought to have creosote or something thrown over all manure heaps and such like, and they simply don't give any orders, with the result that the air is thick with them. I was in a field ambulance near Ypres the other day. It was a hot day and the place was alive with flies, which crawled over the poor wounded men, who were too bad to push them off. One man had a lot of blood, more or less dry, on his face, and it was a sparkling mass of flies, and it will be a wonder if he doesn't die of blood-poisoning. The R.A.M.C. people don't know what to do and can't cope with the huge numbers."

Comment is superfluous. Why don't some energetic V.A.D.'s form a brigade to declare war on flies? Along this way useful service lies.

Yours &c.,

COMMON SENSE.

THE DANGERS OF FIRE.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—I am very glad that you have drawn attention to the dangers of fire at the present time in adapted buildings now being used as hospitals, as I think they are very apt to be overlooked. I wonder how many of the workers in the smaller voluntary military hospitals have had any instruction in what to do in the event of an outbreak of fire, and in how many are fire-hose or buckets of sand in readiness. Does the war probationer ever give a thought to the wooden staircase, or to what she would do in the ward in the absence of the staff nurse, if anything or anybody caught fire?

When I held a Matron's post I made a point of emphasising the dangers of fire to probationers in the course of lectures which I gave them, but I do

not think this is usual, though to my mind it is most important; forewarned is forearmed, and such emergencies are best met by considering them beforehand, not on the spur of the moment, when an inexpedient method may be adopted. Of course, in a hospital of considerable size there is usually a fire drill at intervals, but the instructor from the fire brigade usually confines his teaching to fires connected with the building, and thus with the running out and use of the fire-hose, and the method of descending from upper floors in the escape. Outbreaks of fire in the wards such as you describe from the overturning of a steam kettle—in which, by the way, the patient may be scalded by the steam, as well as the bed set on fire by the burning oil—do not come within his purview. They do come within that of the Matron, and she cannot be too insistent on the need of the constant alertness and carefulness by which such accidents are avoided. It should be impressed upon probationers that competence is proved more by their avoidance than by meeting them when they arise, though this, of course, is necessary as a second line of defence.

In regard to Christmas decorations, I once went into a hospital ward where a delicate little baby, the pet of the ward, was struggling back to life. He lay smiling serenely in a cot of which the quilt was formed of cotton wool, and the curtains covered with the same hospital property, fluffed out, and so exceptionally inflammable, and decorated with tinsel leaves. A more dangerous death-trap could scarcely be devised.

Yours faithfully,

A RETIRED MATRON.

THE SPIRIT OF RESPONSIBILITY.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—In answer to your correspondent's question, "Is the spirit of responsibility deteriorating in the trained nurse of to-day, and if so, why?" I do not think it is, and it is for this very reason that nurses take an intelligent interest in their conditions of work and surroundings to which your correspondent takes exception.

The doctrine of non-responsibility may be carried too far. Supposing, for instance, it is within the knowledge of a nurse that her superior officer drinks, or takes drugs. Is she to keep silence and say "it is not for me to criticise, it is her responsibility, not mine"? Has she no responsibility to the patients, or even to her untrustworthy superior? I suppose some people must think so, but in my view silence in such a case would be criminal.

Yours faithfully,

CONSCIENCE.

OUR PRIZE COMPETITIONS.

August 28th.—Describe the most practical and aseptic indoor uniform for War nursing.

September 4th.—How would you combat the danger of fly infection, (1) in relation to milk, (2) in relation to the spread of disease?

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)