

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 TEST OF CONVICTION.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—I wonder how many trained nurses realise that the very existence of Nursing as a profession is in danger in this country, if the Bill drafted by the College of Nursing, Limited, becomes law.

The basic principles for which our Empire is pouring out its treasure, its glorious young manhood, and sacrificing the happiness of its women, *i.e.*, the right to live in honourable and free communion with humanity, to earn one's bread without oppression, and thus serve God and the State, human rights for which we trained nurses have striven for so many years, will never be ours unless we unite at once to prevent the tyrannical constitution of the College of Nursing being incorporated by Act of Parliament.

Those of us who have carefully watched the growth of this oligarchy during the past nine months are convinced that its promoters are actuated by the same intolerant policy which inspired them eleven years ago, when they first drafted the scheme, and that the only result will be the subordination of the nursing profession. We realised and resisted the danger in 1905. We must resist it now. The question is are the independent members of the profession going to oppose the College Bill, as drafted, or are they not? I can answer for myself. I object to its autocratic assumption of authority over my whole life without my consent, I therefore intend to do everything in my power to prevent the College policy of government of workers by employers being incorporated in an Act of Parliament.

In the past the members of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses have clung to their principles and have worked and paid for them. They have been playing this valiant part for some fourteen years, and they have got to go on playing it until a *just* Registration Bill is passed. That is what we are out to get, and we must get it.

When we realise what our hon. officers have accomplished with the very limited financial support at their command, we can estimate how much heart and soul they have lavished in support of our liberties. To enumerate a few: (1) Five years' labour to get our case heard by a Committee of the House of Commons, which resulted in a unanimous recommendation in 1905 that it is "desirable that a Register of Nurses should be kept by a Central Body appointed by the State."

Then three more years hard work to get a Bill through the House of Lords in 1908. Six more interminable years' drudgery before the test of

opinion in the House of Commons in 1914, when it was proved by a majority vote of 229 that the country was with us.

How many nurses have taken the trouble to realise what such results have cost in hard cash? Thanks to the recent exposé of many things in the High Courts, we now know this propaganda has cost thousands of pounds, and who has paid for it.

The question is, Are we going to have the victorious results of this monumental labour and self-sacrifice made null and void by the very people whose cruel opposition has made it necessary? I sincerely hope not. Unless we are to prove ourselves the invertebrate creatures we shall surely become if we shirk our duty now.

We need the sinews of war. Publicity costs money, therefore money we must have. If what is now known as the Employers' Bill is to be defeated and a just Nurses' Bill to become law, we need at least £100, and little enough to counteract the social and official influence ranged against us. If further sacrifice is necessary we must make it. Those who are really in earnest please send what you can afford. It does not matter how little or how much. Go without something, it will do you good, and send what is saved to our untiring and devoted Miss M. Breay, Hon. Secretary, Society for State Registration of Trained Nurses, 431, Oxford Street, London, W., who is often about her voluntary task for your benefit till daylight doth appear.

Yours faithfully,

HENRIETTA J. HAWKINS.

A VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—An overseas nurse, I have been working in England for upwards of a year. I am simply astounded at the extraordinary lack of freedom in the nursing profession in England, and wonder how ever women of British parentage can endure it. What strikes us Colonials is that social influence apparently governs the entire nursing world. It is amazing—this feudalism in the twentieth century. I have been collecting information for some articles I am to provide to American and Canadian papers after the War. I shall deal with this deplorable aspect of nursing in England. It may interest you to know that, when in California last year, THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING came under my notice. I asked an American nurse its policy, and her reply was, "A Voice Crying in the Wilderness!" and, indeed, since I have been here I have realized how true was her description, and what a deep debt of gratitude the whole nursing world owes to you for the persistent courage with which you have stood for the "professional enfranchisement" of the trained nurse throughout the world—and for your frank onslaughts on all forms of snobbery and privilege.

Yours cordially,

A SISTER OF THE SNOWS.

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