

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.

NATIONAL UNION OF TRAINED NURSES.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—I find there is a misunderstanding about the paragraph referring to Miss Sparshott which appeared in your issue of April 14th.

I shall be obliged if you will kindly publish this letter, in order that it may be clearly understood that the paragraph was an editorial comment and not one sent in by the office of the N.U.T.N.

I am, yours faithfully,

E. L. C. EDEN, *Hon. Secretary.*

46, Marsham Street,
Westminster, S.W. 1.

[The paragraph in question is written throughout with the editorial "we," so that there should be no misunderstanding as to its being editorial comment.—ED.]

THE NEED FOR NURSE DIETITIANS.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—I am afraid the experience of "M. H.," writer of an article on the Need for Nurse Dietitians, in last week's number of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, has been anything but happy. For the last fourteen years I have been actively connected with hospitals—four—including my training school which was a large London hospital, where the kitchens at that time, were in charge of an excellent steward. Of the other three one was a children's hospital—another a special London hospital, and the fourth a busy provincial hospital mainly for surgical cases.

In none of these have I ever come across the thick bread and butter (stale), the watery cabbage, &c., of which your contributor speaks.

Early in my training the Ward Sister under whom I had the good fortune to work initiated me into the change of diet which with very little teaching could be easily learned and practised in a medical ward.

Milk was given as milk jelly, junket, sherry whey, milk tea; also, in the case of typhoid fever cases, we were shown how to flavour it with cocoa, coffee and vanilla. Certainly, the cases on "milk only" were not given milk (hot or cold) two hourly without some effort being made to vary the diet. As for the dinners they were sent up beautifully hot to the wards, there was always a variety of diet—chops, chicken, fried fish, mince, roast joints and Irish stew or haricot, and the greens were well cooked. The serving of the dinners was in the hands of the Ward Sister and they reached the patient in a most palatable condition.

A certain amount of dripping has always been sent up to the wards in the four hospitals of which I can speak personally

At the children's hospital where the house-keeping was under the direction of the Matron the children's food was most excellent. Chicken broth was made from the necks and legs of pullets, and very good it was.

I imagine there are very few hospitals where the housekeeping is not under the supervision of a trained nurse, but each hospital has its own fixed diet scale and a nurse does not as a rule go through a long and arduous training to become a cook at the end of it.

As for fruit, probably "M. H." has no practical knowledge of the price per lb. of fruit and what an enormous outlay that item of diet alone would mount up to per week say in a hospital of 200 to 300 beds.

When rhubarb is plentiful it is largely used in hospitals, but even the sugar required for its preparation is not a small quantity.

Is it fair to quote cases like the unfortunate man who was fed on one meal a day and stale bread, and then sent to a one-roomed home to feed up? I am afraid it is difficult to believe this in these days when hospitals are so alive to the benefit of convalescent homes, and where the Insurance Act relieves so greatly those who are by illness unable to follow their work. Certainly the diet of hospital is plain, but as a general rule the patients' food is well cooked and of an excellent quality. The meals are varied as much as is possible, and the nursing staff assist in every way to make the meals as palatable as possible.

With the present dearth of potatoes, hospital patients generally are having a diet of substitutes, and only those who are directly connected with the kitchen department can fully realize the extra work they entail.

I hope you will forgive this somewhat wordy vindication of hospital diets, but I feel "M. H.'s" experiences are the exception and not the rule.

Yours faithfully,

M. R. S.

OUR PRIZE COMPETITIONS.

QUESTIONS.

May 19th.—Give a short description of the following diseases, and give details of general nursing and management: (a) chorea; and (b) delirium tremens.

May 26th.—Describe the abdominal complications of enteric fever, and give an account of the methods of nursing employed in these.

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