

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.

EFFICIENCY BEFORE CHEAPNESS.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

MADAM,—The country is beginning to realise that a Ministry of Health is necessary. City Corporations, Town Councils and other governing bodies are already bestirring themselves to look after the mother and infant within their boundaries. Unless, however, we are to become a "C 3" Empire a more thorough realisation of the situation is necessary.

It is lamentable that so many of these public bodies have decided to do their work "on the cheap." Their only apparent desire is to show they are "doing something," without increasing the rates; yet the care of Mother and infant, as shown by the Local Government Board in their Circular of 1918, is one of the most important branches in Reconstruction. It should secure the best workers, most experienced, best educated and consequently most highly paid. To ensure good work good workmen must be obtained, and for good workmen good money must be paid.

Despite this accepted axiom, one is constantly reading of Corporations advertising for "A Lady holding the Central Midwives Board's Certificate or a Health Visitor's Certificate"—the former is generally essential. Both certificates are excellent and necessary, but should be held in conjunction with a certificate of three years' general training.

The salaries offered suggest the Sweating System in the highest degree. To ask any woman competent to undertake duties of such national importance to work, lodge, board, dress, pay for coal, laundry and annual holiday, and provide for old age on £85 to £100 per annum is a scandal. Sometimes the advertiser offers as further inducement £3 to £5 in lieu of uniform, well knowing it cannot be provided for that sum. When, moreover a *trained Nurse* is preferred, "with C.M.B. Certificate, Health Visitor's Certificate, Maternity and Child Welfare Certificate and others," and the *same salary* is offered we need not wonder that Mr. Hayes Fisher deplored the scarcity of Nurses and midwives as being one of the great obstacles in the way of the Ministry of Health.

There are plenty of trained women eminently qualified for this sphere of work who are forced to remain in posts which, though under paid offer board and lodging. Public Authorities should pay a salary in proportion to the work to be undertaken—£200 per annum, rising by increments—for a fully qualified woman, and these nurses would be able to offer their services to the community.

The Royal Air Force rightly pays £200 to Women Area Inspectors, £175 to Superintendents of their women's hostels, plus quarters, outfit

allowance £20 and other extras. This after *three weeks' training*. Yet the country remunerates Nurses—or does without them—who undertake greater responsibilities and have spent years and money acquiring knowledge and skill with less than half the amount considered necessary for work requiring much less training.

The Local Government Board, on page 7 of its Circular on "Maternity and Child Welfare," after enumerating the duties and necessary qualifications of Health Visitors, to assure the local Authorities obtaining the Board's Grant towards incurred expenses, suggests that the Health Visitor be paid not less than £120 *per annum*, whether she be a trained nurse or not. We need hardly wonder at the salaries offered by local Authorities when an Advisory Board makes such incompetent and unfair suggestions.

I am, yours truly,

JENTIE B. N. PATERSON.

Member National Union of Trained Nurses.

KERNELS FROM CORRESPONDENCE.

Another T.F. Nurse: "I can hardly believe a 'Territorial Nurse on Active Service' could express such an opinion on the 'Man in Blue' in 'buses. It seems to me nursing etiquette, no matter how tired she is, for a Territorial Nurse to refuse to take the seat of a patient. The 'bus hog' is indeed becoming a blot on the community and I have seen men in mufti, and women, sitting whilst the wounded have to stand, and pushing and jostling against arms in splints and leg stumps, &c., when getting in and out. I have also said an indignant word in season."

"Independent Nurse": "I enclose the Petition to the Premier, signed, asking for the direct representation of the organised societies of nurses on the Provisional Governing Body authorised by Parliament to frame the Rules and Regulations in a Nurses' Registration Bill. I note in the Seventh Draft of the Co lege B1 that it is *specially provided to exclude* the representatives of the nurses' societies from participating in this responsible duty. It is scandalous. May I urge every certificated nurse trained at my old school—University College Hospital—to look into this matter, and sign the Petition."

COMING EVENT.

October 26th.—Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses. Meeting, Council Chamber, British Medical Association, 429, Strand, London, W.C. 2.30 p.m.

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