

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.

TRAINED NURSES IN PUBLIC HEALTH.

DEAR MADAM,—May I take this opportunity to ask all trained nurses in Public Health not to take advice from correspondents who do not sign their names to the statements they make.

Public Health Nurses should refrain from welcoming a scheme such as that in the recent Circular issued by the Ministry of Health for Public Health Nurses and Health Visitors which does not lay down the principle that the minimum qualification for Public Health appointment should be three years' general training, in a recognised training school. Preference should be given to those Nurses who possess additional qualifications, such as the C.M.B., experience in a children's hospital or experience in tuberculosis work.

Public health departments are not organised for training. Moreover, we claim that if the Ministry of Health wish to send round health visitors among mothers and babies, school children, and tuberculous soldiers, those people have the right to the services of fully qualified Nursing Sisters.

We all know that in the eyes of the Government there is no such thing as a "trained nurse," but we also know that a girl of twenty, with two years' polytechnic training, or a graduate with one year's polytechnic training are not the best people to be sent round as health visitors.

During the war a parliamentary committee revealed the fact that the supply of fully-trained nurses was woefully inadequate. There are no nurses in the Public Health service who are available at present to train others. They are engaged and paid by local authorities to carry out specified duties under local medical officers, such as health visiting, school nursing, tuberculosis health visiting and dispensary work. In nearly every instance those nurses are doing extra work at salaries ranging from £100 to £150 a year.

Notwithstanding the fact that scores of trained nurses are out of work through having been advised to serve their country, the Ministry of Health propose to ignore the claims of such splendid women, and waste public money on "flappers" and graduates.

"Onward" is mistaken in supposing that trained nurses in public health are required, by Dr. Addison to help to train people for the work. The regulations state:—

- (1) That a girl of eighteen should receive two years' training at the Battersea Polytechnic.
- (2) That a University Graduate or a trained nurse should receive one year's training at the Battersea Polytechnic.

Thus, in order to become a health visitor a girl of 18 need only take two years' training. A trained nurse will be four or five years in training. At the end of that time she will emerge on the same level as the inexperienced girl, viz., that of a health visitor.

I would urge all trained nurses to send for the Board of Education regulations from H.M. Stationery Office, Imperial House, Kingsway, price 1d., and to read every sentence very carefully. Especially would I urge them to protest about paragraph seven, in which the following statement is made. "It is not practicable or indeed necessary to require that every intending Health Visitor should include in her course a three years' training in nursing. Further after careful consideration it has been decided that the course need not include the whole of the syllabus prescribed for the Certificate of the Central Midwives Board."

Such a paragraph is an insult to the motherhood of our country. It is also a very poor recompense for the excellent work done by fully trained nurses in the public health service.

I remain, Yours truly,

C. MARGARET ALDERMAN.

REPLIES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Pension.—A large capital sum would have to be raised in order to secure a sufficient pension to a nurse who is obliged to retire after a period of 15 to 20 years. The best plan would probably be to take out a policy in some society acceptable to her, and to keep the premiums paid up, so long as she remains a member of your Association. When she ceases to work for it she would either claim the pension if due, or retain the policy and keep up the premium.

We note that the salary paid to the nurse in whom you are specially interested has been too small to permit her to make this provision herself, and we would suggest that (1) you should in future employ a nurse with full hospital training, and (2) pay her a salary which will enable her to make this provision, or (3) keep up her premium while employed by your Association, as suggested above.

We agree that in the present instance the best plan would be to raise a sum by subscription in a lump sum, or annually, and make an allowance to the nurse.

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

QUESTIONS.

September 13th.—In what circumstances may delirium arise in cases of infectious disease? What forms may the delirium assume? What precautionary measures may have to be adopted?

September 20th.—What are the causes of spinal caries? How would you nurse a case of this kind?

September 27th.—What is hyper-pyrexia? What means are available for its reduction?

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