

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 GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—I read with deep interest the report of the meeting of the General Nursing Council published in your last issue. It is good to know that henceforth we may expect to find its proceedings reported in the JOURNAL. I hope, before long, to read that the Council is ready to receive applications for registration and so the aspirations of over a quarter of a century will find fulfilment. If I can gauge nursing feeling accurately, and I believe I can, thousands of nurses will rally to the standard once the word is spoken. It will be a joyful day.—Yours faithfully,

A LIFE-LONG REGISTRANT.

THE SHORTAGE OF NURSES.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—The shortage of nurses at the present time can be traced to various causes, but the main cause is probably the economic and social disadvantages under which nurses are placed. The economic disadvantages affect a large number of suitable candidates. (a) There are many occupations suitable for women which do not demand either the mental concentration or the bodily energy which is essential in the training of a nurse. (b) The salaries earned in such occupations are often considerably larger than are the salaries of nurses working in hospital or on district work. (c) The hours of duty are considerably longer for nurses than they are for women in other occupations and professions.

The social conditions deter many women who would, if trained, make excellent nurses. During the period of training a nurse has very little opportunity for meeting people outside her own profession. There are two reasons for this: (a) The hours on duty are such that it is difficult to visit unless she has intimate friends near. (b) There is no opportunity to return hospitality unless the medium of the restaurant is adopted, and the salary of a nurse will not allow of frequent restaurant entertaining. The nurse is thus often debarred not only from the joys of home life, but even from social intercourse, as are women in no other profession.

The hours during which a nurse is expected to be on duty—and not to show signs of fatigue—are often sufficient to break the spirit of the most ardent. An average duty of 68 to 70 hours per week, with studies and lectures to fill in the off-duty time, does not allow much leisure for visiting or recreation, and very often the end of the working day finds the nurse too tired to change from uniform into mufti. So much for the disadvantages under which the nurse labours.

In some institutions a 48-hour week has been

arranged, and consequently an increase of staff is necessary. Thus a bigger demand is created.

The aftermath of war—the maimed, the lame, the blind and the mentally afflicted—all call for an increase to the ranks of nurses.

The civilian population has also suffered mentally and physically, during the past six years, and here again we find an increasing demand for trained and skilful nurses.

Public Health Work, School Nursing, Infant Welfare and Maternity Centres are calling week by week for trained nurses, and gradually the public are realising the importance of a nurse's work in preventing the spread of disease and in building up the physique of the new generation. The demand will, therefore, be increased, rather than lessened, in the near future.

If women of the right calibre are to be attracted to the Nursing Profession, it is necessary that the economic, social and physical conditions of a nurse's life should be considerably improved and that speedily.

There is, however, one other factor which, perhaps, is partly outside our sphere of influence. The tendency of the present day is to seek after pleasure. A nurse's life will always demand a certain amount of self-sacrifice, and until our girls have been taught that life demands giving as well as receiving, there will be a shortage of nurses. Certainly the more one gives, the more is demanded but if giving was mutual, instead of a few giving of their best, until they were physical wrecks, we should have advanced considerably towards the solving of even larger problems than the shortage of nurses.

M. DUGDALE.

KERNELS FROM CORRESPONDENCE.

Miss M. L. Hunter, Matron Special Hospital for Officers, Palace Green, Kensington.—“I should like to point out that the appeal recently published in several newspapers *re* dainties for shell-shocked patients in this hospital was quite unauthorised, no one in authority in connection with this hospital having made any such appeal.”

Miss H. K.—“Enclosed is a cutting from one of our last week's local papers. The woman referred to is typical of many of the private nurses who carry on here. (The cutting is a letter from a lady who engaged a nurse at 2½ guineas a week on presentation of her card, inscribed “Nurse —, Certified Nurse. London diploma,” only to find later that she was a monthly nurse who had never had any hospital training.—ED.) These so-called nurses proudly say, ‘I nursed him till he died,’ not realising that had they left the patient alone he might not have died. Our only hope is that the Rules to be framed by the General Nursing Council will in time rectify these evils.”

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

August 14th.—What are the principal causes of malnutrition in the school child, and what are its effects?

August 21st.—What special points should be observed in caring for (a) the blind; (b) the deaf?

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