

## 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.*

## LAY versus PROFESSIONAL CONTROL.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—The account in this week's BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING of the proceedings of the General Nursing Council is sorry reading. I am filled with shame and indignation on two counts and do not know which I feel the more acutely—the studied insult to Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, or the grievous deprivation the cause of Nursing suffers from the treatment meted out to her.

Here is a woman of outstanding abilities, endowed, moreover, with that, to our sex, rare gift, a legal mind; a woman who has devoted her time, energies, powers and means for more than forty years to the task of raising nursing to the rank of a profession and of safeguarding the rights of nurses; a woman whose name is a household word in European and American nursing circles, who at every international meeting of organised trained nurses is acclaimed a *persona grata*, and who has indubitably done more for her profession and generation than any other woman in the land. The Chair of the Registration Standing Committee of the General Council of Nursing seemed to be hers by right of service and of qualification. While she occupied it we felt that, in spite of difficulties all would be well for us, and we expected for her loyal appreciation from the members serving under her. Instead of this she has been ousted from the Committee, and, to add as fine a point as possible, a laywoman has been elected instead. Hamlet without the Prince indeed!

The Registration Standing Committee is the body responsible for far-reaching decisions of vital moment, affecting the profession of Nursing both now and for the future, and the nurses of England and Wales are in a lamentably defenceless position with their interests in the hands of that Committee as now constituted. To six of its eight members I take grave exception. In October last four of these shook our confidence by moving and voting for a motion to compile the State Register without records of qualifying certificates; a disaster we have only now, with great difficulty, averted. The motion was entirely at variance with the rules the Committee was expected to administer, and was calculated to be economically gravely detrimental to the working nurses. After such dereliction of duty and flouting of our rights what confidence can be reposed in either Miss Cox-Davies (mover), Miss Dowbiggin, Dr. Goodall or Miss Peterkin? The fifth is Miss Coulton, who was responsible for the motion to nullify Rule 43 (2) to get permission to recast the Standing Committees, obviously in order to engineer the vital

change on the Registration Standing Committee, the reason tendered being so entirely inadequate and inept that it could not mislead the most puny intelligence. The sixth is the Hon. Mrs. Eustace Hills, my contention being that, as a laywoman, there is no place for her on this particular Standing Committee. She cannot supply what is requisite—the exercise of expert professional knowledge.

I feel pretty certain that the Minister of Health would have realised what havoc was being made of our safety and interests had he come into direct touch with the Minority of the General Nursing Council. He might then have been in a position to weigh the relative value to him, as well as to us, of the persons who resigned office after sacrificing our certificates and of those who fought for them.

We nurses owed our knowledge of the trend of events solely to THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, and that free organ in the Press we owe in more than one sense to the woman who has been hounded out of office. To her I tender heartfelt and respectful thanks on my own behalf and on behalf of those who, for the sake of their bread and butter, dare not put their views in print. Our thanks are due not only for what she does, but for what she suffers on our behalf. It is grievous that her splendid powers have still to be expended in needless fight for bare rights. We thought, when the Act was passed, a congenial sphere of constructive organisation lay before her, and we knew what integrity and ripe judgment she would bring to the task and confidently hoped great things.

Yours very truly,

ELLEN B. KINGSFORD.

Fallow Corner, N. 12.

## THE NEW FIGHT FOR JUSTICE.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—It is with the utmost indignation that I read in THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING of the reactionary conduct of the "strike" section of the General Nursing Council. Disgust and contempt are words that very inadequately describe what all honourable minded members of the Nursing Profession and the Public must feel on reading the record of such "devious" policy.

We all know the lady against whom the cabal in the General Nursing Council are working, and hold her in the highest veneration and affection. Personally I do not care to be under a General Nursing Council of which she is not a member.

One of my thoughts on reading an account of the meeting of the Registered Nurses Parliamentary Council in our Journal of March 18th, and of that of the General Nursing Council in the issue of March 25th, was that I did not care much whether my name was on the State Register or not, if the conduct of affairs was not in the hands of the right people—meaning of course our professional leaders—but my State Certificate has just been returned from being framed, and I have changed my mind; for on it, as Chairman of the Registration Com-

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