

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.

HOW TO DEPRECIATE THE GENERAL PART OF THE REGISTER.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—As you have been good enough to open the question of the admission of existing nurses to the first State Register in THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, could you kindly find space to publish this letter, bringing forward points which are apparently being rather overlooked.

That the Existing Nurses' clause of the Nurses' Registration Act was so worded as to admit very widely to the first State Register, was thoroughly understood by the Nursing Profession when the Act became law in December, 1919. We accepted it fully then in word. We ask that now we also accept it as fully in deed, by seeing that the rules drawn up by the G.N.C. shall be in strict conformity to the meaning of the Act. It is up to us as a profession to play the game.

We hold a rule should be framed giving the G.N.C. power to accept applicants for State Registration on their individual credentials, without rigidly defining the method by which such credentials have been obtained. How could such a rule have the effect of admitting "dangerously incompetent" persons to any part of the Register, or "specialists" to the General Part? Under the Act, every applicant must satisfy the G.N.C. she, or he, has "adequate knowledge and experience" of nursing the sick. That there should be additional supplementary registers for those nurses whose training and subsequent experience has been entirely confined to one branch of the profession is very probable, though it is unlikely that V.A.D.s would ask for one. But every applicant for the General Part of the Register must have adequate knowledge and experience in the nursing of men and women, both medical and surgical cases. It is unthinkable that with these safeguards provided by the Act, the G.N.C. under such a rule could admit "dangerously incompetent" persons to any part of the Register, or "specialists" to the General Part.

To intimate that as the Act is not compulsory the position is not so important is surely rather unusual reasoning. If it does not matter, whether we become State Registered or not, as we can practise without, why then did we work for State Registration? If on the other hand we admit that the unregistered nurse will be working at a disadvantage, can any good come of such a grave injustice as refusing admission to the first State Register of hundreds of nurses who undoubtedly under the Act have the right to be registered? It should be remembered that this injustice is accentuated, under the present rules, as many of the applicants turned down are, by virtue of their

many more than three years' excellent experience, infinitely more highly qualified to nurse, than an applicant, admitted by virtue of having served for one year as a probationer in a Cottage Hospital, followed by two years' bona fide practice. To speak of this year in such a hospital as training is misleading. Is there any system of training in these small institutions?

I remain,
Yours faithfully,

M. C. HERBERT.

8, Porchester Square,
Hyde Park, W. 2.

[We have found space for Miss Herbert's lengthy letter, although there are few new arguments made by her, in her support of the College campaign to make it obligatory to place nurses with no "general training" on the General Part of the Nurses' Register. We take our stand on the clause in the Act which makes the Council responsible for "satisfying itself" that "existing nurses" have "adequate knowledge and experience of the nursing of the sick." This knowledge and experience they cannot possess without theoretical and practical training—and how is the G.N.C. to test it if the applicants do not possess it? We do not know what Miss Herbert means by "playing the game." To place persons with no training in general nursing on the General Part of the Nurses' Register would be to delude the sick public, whom the Act is intended to protect. This is not our idea of "cricket"!

The truth is that the College of Nursing, Ltd., Memorandum provides for the registration of "all classes of nurses," a system it has not complied with on its own voluntary Register, and has no right to attempt to enforce on the State Register.

As to the V.A.D.s not asking for admission to the State Register—the Committee of which Sir Arthur Stanley is chairman as well as of the College approached the G.N.C. requiring to learn if they were to be admitted in 1920; and, of course, much of the agitation to sweep away the protection of the one year's general training is made on their behalf.

The V.A.D.s have their own List under the V.A.D. Regulations, which is all they are entitled to; but nurses must make no mistake on this question; if they return the College candidates to form the new General Nursing Council, some form of privilege for V.A.D.s will be established at the dictation of the dual Chairman of the College and the V.A.D. Committee. There is no doubt about that, as social influence governs the British Red Cross Society, and the College candidates owe allegiance to the same Chairman, and have constantly, in the past, placed that allegiance before their duty to the Nursing Profession as a whole, as members of the General Nursing Council (*vide* Rule 9, a).

Our contention that women with no general training would not be unjustly treated if they are not granted the title of "Registered Nurse" is quite sound. The truth is, thousands

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)