

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 INARTICULATE MENTAL NURSE.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—While agreeing with some of your remarks anent the Mental Nursing Committee's report to the last meeting of the General Nursing Council, there are a few which are not quite accurate, and with your permission I should like to correct.

Mental nurses did take part, financially and personally, in the agitation for Registration almost from its inception, and some of us as you are aware even assisted by giving evidence before the Select Committee appointed by the House of Commons in 1904.

It is unfortunately a fact that Mental nurses until very recently have not been articulate enough to make themselves heard, and they have been cold-shouldered in consequence, not because they had nothing to say, but because the Nursing Press, as a whole, absolutely ignored them as a body. We were compelled to work out our own salvation without aid from any quarter.

Had we had a Lady Cowdray or a College of Nursing behind us to stump the country on our behalf, matters might be very different in the mental nursing world and we might to-day be taking our proper place in the movement.

It is, however, quite true that Mental Hospital authorities have taken very little trouble to encourage or point out to their staffs the importance of State Registration, nor have they done so even yet, but this is the fault of the system in vogue, which the more enlightened members of the Medico-Psychological Association, to do them justice, desire to see altered.

You will agree, I think, there must be something radically wrong with a system which tolerated medical superintendents having the power to prohibit examinations in order to prevent their staff getting appointments elsewhere or entering the ranks of private nursing, as many of them did.

It would, indeed, as you point out, be an excellent thing to have had a representative who would visit the various mental hospitals to point out the advantages of State Registration, as, unfortunately, in many ways the Nursing Press have stood in their own light in the past because of their want of sympathy, and do not, in consequence, circulate as they ought in mental hospitals, and the ignorance of the fundamentals of the Act even among the higher officials is appalling.

Faithfully yours,

R. DONALDSON.

8, Hinde Street,
Manchester Square, W.1.

[We cannot agree with Mr. Donaldson that Mental Nurses as a class took effective action in

the thirty years' agitation for registration, a few Mental Nurses only, as individuals, supporting it. The Asylum Workers' Association, whilst it existed, consistently refused to co-operate with the supporters of the registration movement. Neither is the statement, "We were compelled to work out our own salvation without aid from any quarter," quite correct. In drafting the first Nurses' Registration Bill, the Society for State Registration of Nurses carefully included the special rights of the Mental Nurses, and urged them, throughout its long and costly campaign. We suggest that patronage is most injurious to all classes of workers, and in our opinion Mental Nurses are to be congratulated that they were not financed by Lady Cowdray or any other millionaire, even if they were unable to "stump the country on their own behalf" in the past. We hope to see at no distant date a strong, self-supporting, self-governing organisation of Mental Nurses, established to promote and protect their own educational standards and economic interests. Self-support is the only honourable method of securing professional stability, and until every class of nurse realises this they will make little moral progress. Now that we have legal status it is our duty to secure self-government on the same basis on which other learned professions are established.—ED.]

We have received a letter from Miss A. E. Macdonald on this subject for which we hope to find space next week.

KERNELS FROM CORRESPONDENCE.

NEPOTISM IN THE G.N.C.

S. R. N., Birmingham.—"I read 'Three New Dangers' in last week's issue with amazement, especially No. 1. All told we are a professional class of some 100,000—and it is evident we must find an income of at least £10,000 a year to finance our G.N.C. work, including examinations. And it appears absolutely incredible that Sir Cooper Perry and his friends are to secure one of our official 'plums' for their unprofessional protégée. The post of Examination Officer, to cost us £700 a year, should be filled by a Registered Nurse. It will be a most scandalous piece of nepotism if it is allocated to a laywoman. I hope the names of the members of the G.N.C. who support this job will be taken down and made public."

THE TIME IS SHORT.

The General Nursing Council for England and Wales reminds Nurses that every person who desires to be Registered as an Existing Nurse must apply before July 14th, 1923, after which date no application can be entertained.

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION QUESTIONS.

June 16th.—What is Insulin? How is it produced? How does it affect diabetes?

June 23rd.—Describe the method of administering pituitrin, and any case in which you have seen it prescribed.

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