

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.

PRIVATE NURSING.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—Is it not about time we had a Conference on the question of Private Nursing? Unless some steps are taken to protect the economic condition of the private nurse the public will soon find themselves minus the type of nurse they need and appreciate. That is, the highly skilled, trustworthy, sympathetic woman.

Private nursing should be a free field for remunerative practice for thoroughly trained registered nurses—instead it is no such thing. The chief abuses according to my experience are: (1) The competition of the hospitals, who run private nursing departments for gain—an abuse not as far as I can learn in practice in any other country, certainly not in our overseas Dominions or in the United States; (2) the competition, owing to their employment by doctors, of semi-trained women—specialists and V.A.D.s; (3) competition of district nursing associations in flats and small houses.

I am sufficient of an economist to realise that since the war private nursing conditions have altered, and thousands of people cannot afford a private nurse's living wage, nor can they provide room or domestic service for nurses in their homes; but there must be a solution of these economic difficulties; and as the *B.J.N.* is our only professional organ, I put out the suggestion that we have a Conference to consider the whole matter.

Another point is that while the whole world can apparently afford motor-cars, private nurses' fees are sometimes not forthcoming for weeks.

Yours very truly,

A MEMBER R.N.S.

KERNELS FROM CORRESPONDENCE

THE VALUE OF ORGANISATION.

Miss S. E. Gloster, S.R.N., 29, South Anne Street, Dublin, Organiser of the Nurses and Midwives' Union, writes:—

"A member of our Union recently wrote to us asking us to protest against the low scale of salaries offered recently for a Matron and Nurse by the Longford Co. Board of Health, and not to allow our members to apply for these positions.

"We should very much like to be in a position to comply with this nurse's wishes. We protest against low salaries like these whenever possible, but there is very little good in our doing so when so many nurses are willing, and even anxious, to accept posts at these low salaries. . . .

"It is greatly to be regretted that nurses will not all get together to help each other instead of leaving all the fighting of the battles to the few who are anxious to uplift the profession—the others letting them down at every point by accepting positions no matter how low the salaries may be.

"Conditions are being made worse than ever recently under the public Boards. According to the General Regulations in regard to Management of Institutions under Boards of Health issued by the Ministry of Local Government, Article 55, Rule No. 1, states Day Nurses shall be in their wards at 7 a.m. and remain on duty until 9 p.m. We suppose if the Matron feels so disposed she will allow the nurses off duty for a few hours during the day. In any case we know they do sometimes come out into the outer world but evidently the L.G.D. are not to be thanked for this little blessing in the nurse's life, as they boldly lay

down the rule that she is apparently to stay on duty for 14 hours per day.

"In the days before the Amalgamation schemes the inmates did the nurses' laundry in Poor Law Institutions: Now the nurses have to pay it themselves. The ration allowances are being cut down and bad conditions prevail in many Co. Hospitals and Homes, such as nursing fever cases in premises with half inch dust traps between the Boards in the floors and a very scanty water supply, in some places there being no water at all during the night to flush drains, &c.

"We are sure most nurses will agree with us that ten or twelve hour nights spent in such an atmosphere as that described above deserves better remuneration than £60 per annum with apartments and rations. The rations, consisting of Meat, Bread, Potatoes, Rice and a few such items (no fruit and no vegetables being allowed) are not sufficient to keep any human being in a fit state of health to work in such places.

"These bad conditions might have been prevented by the Union if it could have spoken for the profession, and could rely on the support of all the nurses. Conditions will, I am afraid, continue to get worse until nurses realise the value of organisation."

A JUSTER REPRESENTATION.

The Editor of the *Nursing Mirror*, in reply to a letter from Miss Breay concerning an article in a former issue of that publication on "A Juster Representation," in relation to the International Council of Nurses, complains of the narrowness of the basis of the I.C.N.

The narrowness which makes every nurse certificated by a School of Nursing connected with a General or Poor Law Hospital, giving the approved training, eligible for membership of a National Council, and through it of the International is not apparent to the professional nurse. The lay outlook, which desires to include all and sundry persons in a Council of Nurses would alter the basic principle of the Professional Status of the International Council. Trained Nurses, like other professions, have a right to their own organisations.

ADDRESSES OF BRANCHES FROM WHICH 'THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING' CAN BE OBTAINED.

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Messrs. E. & R. Garrould, 150 to 162, Edgware Road, London, W.2.

Mrs. Clark, 49, Weymouth Street, London, W. (close to the West End Nursing Homes).

We invite those who appreciate THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING to *work* to increase its circulation.

NOTICE.

We are always glad to receive newspapers containing items of interest in regard to hospital and nursing affairs, but will our kind friends *mark* the paragraphs to which they desire to call our attention. Sometimes this is not done, and it is quite impossible to read through the whole of a paper in order to discover the reason for which it has been sent.

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

We regret that we are unable to award a prize this month, no paper of sufficient merit having been received. This is the more to be regretted as the question was very practical, *i.e.*, how to clean (a) a head infested with pediculi, (b) a mouth caked with sordes, (c) a patient's skin for the application of a blister.

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION FOR JULY.

What are the symptoms of encephalitis lethargica? What are the physical signs to be observed—and what nursing treatment is usually ordered?

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