

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.

"WEEDS."

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—I thank you very much for sending me your November number, in which I with great interest have read your Editorial about "Weeds."

It would, however, have been fair and also more useful for the discussion of the problem, if you had extended your quotations from my article in "The World's Health" also to its last passages and to the P.S., in which I sum up my opinions, and I feel sure that you will do it in your next number, when I ask you to do so.

Please, then, to print, and to comment on, the following:—

"The economic and social conditions under which nurses work are so manifold that it would be foolish to wish to cast all in the same mould. The women who desire, and are fitted for, training as nurses are so different in social and educational standards that it would be impossible to evolve a single type of nurse from them. They represent different types from the start, but they are all welcome, for there is room and use for all. Let each one be trained according to her qualifications and future needs, and let the time and contents of the curriculum be such that they can be absorbed and prove useful.

"Let us avoid both humbug training and excessive training, but give everyone a chance to rise as high as her capacity and energy will permit. The problem of the training of nurses must be solved, not by frantic oneness, but by cool circumspection and commonsense.

"P.S.—With regard to the duration of training for fully trained nurses, it is my opinion and experience that if the extensive practical and, notably, the theoretical curricula are really necessary, and if nurses must really learn the prodigious subject matter paraded in the programmes of many schools, then it is necessary that (1) the recruiting of nurses should be confined to women already well-educated, and that (2) the duration of the training must be for at least three years. Otherwise the training will be a humbug. Most of the pupils do not master their lessons at all, or they do so more or less like parrots. But the theoretical subject matter for most hospital nurses need not be so extensive; it may well be cut down. In which case, the Rockefeller Committee's 28 months are sufficient—with post-graduate courses in special subjects."

It was told me in the London Hospital this summer that they had to be very cautious in the recruiting of their nurses, to avoid socially and educationally insufficient girls, who would be unable to follow the courses and to reach and live up to the standard of the London nurses.

I think they are right. Don't you, too?

Permit me, finally, to correct an error in my article in "The World's Health": the Norwegian Red Cross has two types of sisters; the vast majority are "fully trained" in courses of three years—a minority have shorter training.

Yours faithfully,

K. SINDING LARSEN,
Director, Rikshospitalets, Kristiania.

[We thank Dr. Sinding Larsen for his letter, but must reiterate our opinion that a minimum standard of nursing education is just as essential as a minimum standard of

medical education. Moreover, the nurses in outlying districts should know more, not less, than those working in towns and as private nurses, because medical assistance is not so readily attainable.

In regard to this question of Nurse Training, we commend to Dr. Larsen some opinions expressed by Miss Jean Browne, President of the Canadian Nurses' Association, in the current issue of *The World's Health*. Miss Browne writes:—

"In so far as the Rockefeller Report might appear to glorify nursing as a highly educated and self-sufficient profession without special regard to the service motive which has made it possible to recruit the finest type of women for nursing, we must take exception to it. That, in my opinion, is the great weakness of this document.

"The appeal of service which nursing makes to the spiritual forces in a young woman is the deciding factor which draws her into the nursing profession rather than into some more lucrative and pleasing calling. Because this motive is strong, the nurse is able to perform lowly tasks for the sick, and to feel no hardship in a course of training which follows the 'apprenticeship' method. She enters the training school with a realisation of the fact that her education as a nurse must take second place in case of conflict between it and the care of the patient in the hospital."

Miss Jean Browne combats the notion that an ideal nurse is "a thoroughly trained automaton, whose only lodestar is obedience." She writes:—

"It is a characteristic feature of the modern young woman in this country, at least, that she does nothing blindly. She insists on thinking for herself. If she chooses nursing as her profession, she does not see any necessity for suspending her processes of thought. She believes that her intelligence is a gift to be used for humanity, and she uses it. She has no notion of trying to usurp the domain of the physician, that is, the diagnosis and treatment of disease, but she has great respect for her own part in the healing of the sick, that is, the expert administration of nursing care, accurate, intelligent and discriminating observation of the patient's condition, and the constant giving of her sympathetic understanding to inspire her patients with confidence and hope. Be very sure that this young woman does not consider she is working for the doctor. She has very definite ideas that she is working for sick people. She is endeavouring to give to the physician intelligent co-operation rather than blind obedience. If she has a disciplined mind, there will not be the slightest friction between her and the physician whose orders for the patient she is carrying out, provided that he, too, has a disciplined mind."—Ed.]

KERNELS FROM CORRESPONDENCE.

Miss M. Cherry, Registered Nurse, writes:—"It might interest you to know that during my holiday this year I had a severe attack of lumbago. After trying all the home remedies I could think of, for a few days without any result, I decided to get medical assistance. The treatment I received to my surprise was Hypodermic injection Morphine gr. $\frac{1}{4}$ c. Saline 3i intermuscular, this was repeated every alternate day and after four doses I was practically all right, quite able and ready to get up. I have been nursing for some years and never before had I ever heard of this treatment."

PRIZE COMPETITION FOR JANUARY, 1925.

As a District Nurse you are called to a patient who is insensible; what inquiries would you make, and what would you do?

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