

## 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 NURSE IN PRIVATE PRACTICE.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

MADAM,—The paper read by Miss E. J. Haswell on July 11th on "Modern Developments of Private Nursing," at the Congress of the International Council of Nurses in Montreal and published in your September issue, is excellent. It would be a great pity if the question she deals with was allowed to drop, for her remarks would make an excellent basis for the establishment of the one thing needed in Private Nursing—organisation. My object in writing to you now is to try to induce those who, like myself, are engaged in private nursing, to combine, and establish some sort of organisation in this branch of the profession. Surely the Royal British Nurses' Association and the British College of Nurses would be willing to help in this matter.

Miss Macdonald's four questions, which she asks at the end of her paper, are very pertinent, and form the crux of the whole situation. I propose to take them seriatim.

1. What shall be the standard of practical knowledge for a nurse in private practice?

The answer is self-evident. She must be a State Registered Nurse. This qualification guarantees that its holder has been fully trained at a well-known hospital, and therefore possesses the practical knowledge necessary for her work.

2. What should be her minimum fee?

This is a difficult question, not only to answer, but also to carry into effect. It is very closely connected with question 3.

3. Is it advisable for hospitals with training schools to maintain staffs of private nurses?

The answer to this latter question is, to my mind, emphatically No. The nurse on a hospital staff is in a very different position to the nurse who has adopted private nursing as her means of livelihood, and it is manifestly unfair for the former to compete with the latter. The former, compared with the latter, has practically no living expenses between cases; she can get more frequent employment than the private nurse; she does not need to establish a connection with doctors. The private nurse, on the other hand, has to maintain herself in such a way as to retain her health and strength between cases; she has to be always well dressed. This means that while employed she must ask a higher fee than the Sister on a hospital staff. She has to find her own cases through the doctors to whom she is known, and many private nurses think they have done well if they get three months' work in the year. Another unfair competitor is the nurse sent out by the Co-operation. Many of these are not registered; many of them are only partially trained. Yet, by asking the fees demanded by their Co. they can, and do, undercut the private nurse. Nurses on hospital staffs, and those from Co.s could easily compete with each other without any mutual detriment, but the private nurse should be in a class apart, and should be regarded as superior to either. In order to ensure this the co-operation of the doctors is essential. If a doctor wants a nurse he takes the easiest way of getting one, and rings up either a Co., or a hospital, leaving the selection of the nurse entirely to these bodies, regardless of the fact that he may get only a half-trained, or a totally unsuitable woman. Pressure should be brought to bear on the medical profession to employ, preferentially, State Registered private nurses on their list, and, only when failing to find one there, to apply to a Co. or a hospital.

The fees for private nurses who are State Registered should be determined without any reference to the fees

demanded by Co.s or hospitals, and the fully-trained State Registered private nurse should consider four guineas a week as her minimum fee, exclusive of living-out expenses.

4. Is it advisable for National Red Cross organisations to encourage short terms of training for their nursing members, and to employ such pupils in competition with Registered Nurses?

The answer is a decided negative. These institutions are welcome to fix their own standards of training, but their half-trained members should never be allowed to compete with fully-trained State Registered Nurses.

There remains one factor, and it is a very important one. This is co-operation and combination among State Registered Nurses. This Co-operation, to be of any use, must be honest and so organised that the State Registered Nurses are bound firmly together to abide by its terms. Any one of these nurses who does not honestly and conscientiously abide by the terms, may get a case at a lower fee for herself now and again, but by so doing is acting against her own interests, and those of her calling, and in the end is bound to suffer. In doing so she will drag all her sisters in private practice down with her. Some sort of deterrent should be instituted to prevent such action, and this is surely the work of either the Royal British Nurses' Association, or of the British College of Nurses, or of both. Would it not be possible for one of these bodies to call a general meeting of private nurses at which this very important question could be discussed, some arrangement come to, and the matter advanced still further? It is more than a pity to allow it to stand where it is at present.

I am, Yours faithfully,

A STATE REGISTERED NURSE IN PRIVATE PRACTICE.

[The question of the organisation of the Nurse in Private Practice is one of great importance, and the above letter should be carefully studied, as it opens up a wide field of discussion. The Editor invites expressions of opinion from nurses engaged in private nursing.—Ed.]

## KERNELS FROM CORRESPONDENCE.

## "B.J.N." Appreciated

Miss Amy Phipps, F.B.C.N., writes:—"The post-Congress issues of the JOURNAL, containing reports of the International Congress, have travelled to many Congressists in various parts of the world—Japan, Canada, U.S.A., and many European countries.

Everywhere they have met with warm appreciation, and many delightful letters have been received testifying to the pleasure they have given. To quote just a few:—

Miss R. —, Philadelphia, writes:—"Your JOURNAL is wonderful—the reports are so sympathetic and have that distinctly 'personal' touch which one so seldom gets. The copies you sent have started on a long round of visits. Again, my warmest thanks."

Miss C. —, Montreal:—"We have so enjoyed reading the Congress reports in your JOURNAL. It reads as though your gifted reporter had been to every session. She has so caught the spirit of the whole thing. It is such a clear and systematic account. I am sending the books on to girls who were trained at home."

Miss A. —, Switzerland, writes:—"Thank you so much for sending us your papers. We were extremely interested and so admire the form and material of your magazine. We are anxious to show them round our hospital when we return from leave."

It is very pleasant indeed to feel that the continuous work, which I know these full reports of the Congress must have entailed, is so widely and warmly appreciated."

## PRIZE COMPETITION FOR DECEMBER.

What do you understand by Shock? What are the principal causes, and how would you deal with this condition till medical assistance can be obtained?

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