

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.

NURSES SHOULD NOT SMOKE IN UNIFORM.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—I am very glad to note the strong feeling on the part of Fellows and Members of the British College of Nurses against Nurses smoking in uniform.

It is impossible to visualise the look of horror on the face of Florence Nightingale could she see the nurse of to-day smoking anywhere and at almost any time. Surely she would have sent from Scutari at a moment's notice any nurse who was even in possession of a cigarette.

Think also of Friedricke Fliedner of Kaiserswerth. Could she ever have managed to prepare those nurses in her primitive pioneer preliminary school if she had indulged in cigarettes? Would she have been the world's example? Would she have appealed to other women? Would she have had time to prepare these women for their wide-world task?

Her pence also were too precious, looking at it from another point of view.

What of the feelings of those who introduced our uniform after years of waiting? Is it right to mar what should be spotless uniform with ash and smell?

Even now I have a strange feeling when I see a nurse in uniform smoking in public; it degrades our uniform and the nurse in the eyes of the general public. They do not look upon it in the light of their own life. Nurses are different; they do not expect the nurse to do many things they do; hers is a vocation, and to many people smoking by a nurse is just as horrible as smoking by a nun would be.

Could we but remember the first nurses were Deaconesses and Nuns, a great contrast with to-day, but even now that much freedom has been granted to our profession, the general public do not accept smoking by nurses.

Recently a nurse in State Registered uniform was seen smoking in a Corner House, and a nurse—a great smoker herself—condemned her with disgust.

Nurses smoking in seclusion often forget that the taint of even one cigarette remains on their clothing until it has been laundered. I realise this to the full; from two nurses I am teaching whom one can readily detect before they reach the classroom; if I, well and unbiased feel this smell nauseating, what must a patient feel whose appetite is never very easily stimulated, when his tray is brought by a nurse bringing with her the odour of stale smoke.

The usual argument for smoking is, "It clears my brain." Nothing is further from the truth, the physiologist would say, seeing that he has proved that nicotine poison is even more deadly than that of alcohol.

Another argument put forward is, "It quiets my nerves." Admitted; but at what an expense.

If we weigh all these points, I think we can resolve that nurses should not smoke in uniform—

For the sake of their profession; their patients; and themselves.

Yours faithfully,
HENRIETTA BALLARD.

OVERSTRAIN.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—We hear much nowadays about the "Overstrain" of Nurses.

A form of overstrain—not to be justified, but which must be taken into account is that caused by the attempt to nurse,

and lead an ordinary life of pleasure at the same time, to regard nursing as a means to an end—to put in so much time in hospital wards, or a sick room, while the real interests of life remain outside. Nursing is an exacting task—mistress and inevitably, and rightly, avenges herself on those who attempt to depose her from her position as absolute monarch. Unquestionably our duty is to keep fit, to guard against overstrain.

A patient's first need is a nurse with freshness and vitality. Drowsiness, lack of alertness, tiredness, as a result of taking time for personal enjoyment from the hours allowed for sleep are inexcusable, and indicate a want of conscientiousness which may show itself in other directions.

Further, nurses have a duty to themselves, and it is futile to insist upon the importance of the rules of hygiene to others, and deliberately ignore them all oneself.

Nevertheless it may be necessary in the stress of emergency deliberately to risk overstrain. But it is the duty of employers, public and private, to refrain from over-taxing the eager and willing worker, and to ensure that under normal conditions, the work of nurses is so arranged that they have sufficient time for sleep and recreation, comfortable quarters, and good and appetising food.

Lastly we know that, for better, for worse, the nursing profession owns our whole-hearted allegiance, and that we would not exchange our chosen vocation for any other in the world.

I am, Dear Madam,

Yours faithfully,

S. R. N.

KERNELS FROM CORRESPONDENCE.

A Great Piece of Work.

A Fellow of the B.C.N. writes: "I think Miss Bushby is doing a great piece of work in organising a history section for our College, I know of nothing of greater interest than the past history of a profession, and history 'in the making' is also most absorbing. I am hoping to come to the Annual Meeting in July, and very much hope that I shall be allowed a glimpse of the history section."

A Satisfying Branch of Nursing.

A Missionary Nurse writes: "I was extremely interested in Miss Round's account of her work published in last month's B.J.N. I hope it will inspire some nurses to offer for service in Mission Hospitals where they are so urgently wanted, and where there is an almost unlimited and interesting field of usefulness. I speak from personal experience.

If one nurse falls out in a hospital in a foreign country from sickness or any other cause, her loss matters amazingly. There are no private nursing staffs upon which to draw, the depleted staff has just to carry on—overworked of course—for its members were working to the top of their bent before. Consequently one breakdown generally means others, and I have even known it necessary to close down a hospital, because one after another the whole of the nurses went down with illness. In outlying stations things are of course, much worse, if a single-handed nurse falls ill.

"One other point. The supply of British nurses may be strictly limited, all the more reason to bend one's energies to teaching the native girls (and boys for that matter). It is work that repays one a thousandfold, and, in their turn, these natives spread the knowledge they have acquired—and so the good work goes on."

PRIZE COMPETITION FOR JULY.

Describe the nursing of a case of measles, with severe broncho-pneumonia, in a private house.

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