

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.

SHOULD THIEVES BE RETAINED ON THE STATE REGISTER OF NURSES ?

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—According to your suggestion I have asked the question of several Registered Nurses in this Club and elsewhere, "Should thieves be retained on the Register"? I now enclose for publication the gist of their replies.

1. Certainly not. It is the duty of the General Nursing Council to maintain discipline in the nursing profession, both for the protection of Registered Nurses and the public.

2. "Oh! don't ask me. Apparently the G.N.C. are a sentimental crew, and not fit to be the governing body of any profession."

3. "The G.N.C. knows what a squishy lot it has to deal with. The nurses are treated with contempt because they have not the courage or the unselfishness to unite in self-protection."

4. "Seems to me influence has a deal to do with the way these cases are presented. Matrons and Sisters are kept on and nurses put off."

5. "As I do not intend to be classed with criminals I have not paid my retention fee."

6. "It's a perfect scandal the way our moral and ethical standards are flouted by the G.N.C. Why not a protest parade up and down Portland Place?"

7. "I don't care. We are treated like dirt, and are becoming demoralised."

8. "What right anyway have lay women and doctors to govern us? In my opinion none whatever. We pay the piper every penny of their extravagant expenditure, some £30,000 a year. We are not on the Treasury dole."

9. "What can we do to protect our good name, cheek by jowl with thieves? The L.C.C. is employing thousands of untrained nurses, many of us can't earn a decent living."

10. "No more nursing for me. I am now in an antique shop, and my young sister shall not enter a hospital."

11. "So long as the G.N.C. covers thieves, just so long every decent girl should be dissuaded from becoming a nurse. Let them recruit from Holloway!"

12. "Have we any rights under the Act or not? The G.N.C. have got swelled head. A set of Mandarins."

13. "We are so economically dependent that thousands of Registered Nurses dare not protest."

14. "I am warning off every girl I know from becoming a nurse."

15. "How about the hospitals which retain thieves on their staffs. What do the subscribers say to that?"

16. "I think it is our duty to the public to take united action and warn them against the Registered Nurse thief."

17. "We deserve all we get; we are a poor lot."

18. "Let every nurse who feels indignation at the degradation of our Register place the matter before her Member of Parliament."

19. "Our own profession is to blame, because the Registered Nurses have the vote on the G.N.C."

Several nurses said they did not care a d—, and others preferred mercy to justice.

You will see I have been busy.

Yours,

F. B. C. N.

THE SCARCITY OF ENTRANTS TO THE NURSING PROFESSION.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

MADAM,—Dr. Esther Carling has, in a recent issue of the *Lancet* (Oct. 11th), drawn attention to the scarcity of entrants to the Nursing profession. The fact is nursing is in much the same plight as other industries and like them needs rationalising. Our nursing is acknowledged to be the finest in the world, yet you hear on all sides that its condition is deplorable. Nursing is influenced by the same economic and psychological factors which crop up whenever work has to be done and paid for. We have had cheap and docile labour, now refusing to be cheap any longer and questioning the sanctions for its discipline. Methods of work are too often antiquated, and costly because they waste material, time and strength.

No one will dispute that the Doctor depends more and more on the Nurse, but what does the Doctor want? Does he want a highly trained woman, an expert in that part of the prevention and cure of sickness which he delegates to her, or does he want someone who has spent the larger part of her training, not in learning to nurse but in scrambling through the work of the Hospital as best she can? Nurses themselves feel bitterly that too often they leave the training school overtired in mind and body, and with insufficient knowledge to be the Doctor's right hand in coping with disease. This discontent spreads, and less and less are educated women willing to enter a profession which is so unsatisfying.

Rationalisation means that we determine the course of events and are not determined by them. Let Doctors and Nurses together convince the public and the Hospital Committees that the present system is uneconomic. Firstly we want to know what are the proper functions of a nurse. Secondly we must decide the number of workers we require and the grades to which they shall belong, so many for nursing the sick, so many for preventive and educational work. Finally we must draw up the appropriate training, remuneration, prospects and conditions of work which will ensure a sufficient supply of suitable labour and keep it contented. Every business firm does this and scraps its old ideas and its old plant as need arises.

I may be criticised for applying economic conceptions to nursing, but when we have sucked the last bit of sweetness from such words as vocation and self-sacrifice we still have to face the fact that we all have to work, and the labourer is worthy of his hire. If the economic conditions are such that workers and material yield their fullest product, we are much more likely to get in addition that precious part of human effort which neither wage nor salary can command or pay for.

I am, Madam,

Yours faithfully,

GLADYS B. CARTER (Miss)

B.Sc., Econ., State Registered Nurse,
Certified Midwife.

University Women's Club,
2, Audley Square, W.1.

NOTICE.

We regret that owing to pressure on our space several important articles and interesting items are unavoidably held over.

PRIZE COMPETITION QUESTION FOR DECEMBER.

Give a safe diabetic diet, diet in pernicious anæmia, and diet in nephritis.

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