

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.

SOCIAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT,
THE UNIVERSITY,
LEEDS, 2.
November 11th, 1948.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

MINORITY REPORT.

MADAM,—I hope you will allow me space in your columns to reply to the open letter addressed to me by a member of your Editorial Board.

Entertaining as the letter undoubtedly is and enlivened by a sparkling felicity of wit, I feel nevertheless urged to comment on it. Not that I cherish any illusions of being able to penetrate the hostile barriers of the author's mind. This would clearly be a prolonged task in view of the fact that the content of the letter is emotionally rather than intellectually determined. My aim is rather to remove some of the resulting misconceptions which may be conveyed to your readers.

The first complaint of your leader-writer is that there is little in my report which she did not know before. (I shall overlook the inconsistency of demanding that statements should also have been included from persons who had completed training, as if my learned critic is unfamiliar with their point of view.) All I need remark is that this response is not shared by a good many other nurses who still feel that they may have something to learn.

After a brief but uplifting homily on the futility of words, the author proceeds, from a superior Emersonian pedestal, to reject my claim that the provision of labour-saving devices will effect the numerical need for nurses. I should have thought this was almost self-evident. It is common knowledge that an appreciable proportion of nurses' time is taken up with domestic duties. In so far as such work, or other work of the domestic staff, may be mechanically performed, there is immediate relief for the nursing staff, which would necessarily affect the number of nurses needed.

The sections dealing with the assessment of nursing effectiveness seem to have been misunderstood. I have not in the remotest way suggested that almoners, dietitians, physiotherapists or allied workers do not perform a valuable service. My task, however, was to assess the function of nursing and not the function of every category of personnel working in hospital. I have restricted myself to an attempt to show what the effects are likely to be, *other things being equal*, if the nurse-patient ratio were to be increased.

The next criticism is to the effect that matrons are well aware that they need more nurses. What they expected me to tell them was where to get the nurses from. The solution to this problem, I suggest, is to be found in Chapter I, which my critic has evidently failed to grasp.

Finally, in describing the authors of the statements in Appendix III as "a group of frustrated females," the critic is at the same time inescapably implying that the total population of 12,000 or 13,000 girls who *annually* abandon nurse training merit a similar description. Let us be perfectly clear that the authors of the published statements are a statistically representative sample of all ex-student nurses. Their offence is simply that they demand a *modus vivendi* more in accord with the spirit of the times. I leave it to them to judge whether they deserve my critic's condemnation.

Perhaps I can best conclude my remarks by quoting one of the wise observations of my late friend Mr. Geoffrey

Pyke. "Always look for what is *right* with something before looking for what is wrong with it." Fault finding, whether of persons or documents, is a diverting task to persons so inclined, but they would be more profitably engaged in exhaustively exploring the merits of a case before letting themselves loose in enumerating its alleged faults. Such an attitude, however, presupposes a mind which is not altogether barred and bolted from within.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN COHEN.

[Tut, tut, Doctor, personal remarks! You disappoint us even more. It is with hesitation, and all due respect, that so erudite a person is referred to the dictionary for the meaning of frustrated. We learn with interest that there is a limit to the number of people to whom this expression may apply. What a pity the Doctor didn't also publish the results of his exhaustive exploration of the merits of the system which is training nearly ten thousand more nurses now than a decade ago. Being familiar ourselves, as he so justly remarks, with both sides of the question, we consider that a great disservice is done to the Nursing Profession by the publication of only one.—D. W.]

October 27th, 1948.

A TREASURED NOTE FROM AMERICA.

DEAR JOURNAL,—I must praise the article on the Bexley Mental Hospital. It must be indeed a model—and especially Matron's darling little Jimmy, who presented the visitors with small pieces of coal! Please M. R. A. write some more.—Sincerely,

L. L. DOCK.

REVIEW.

TEACH YOURSELF SERIES.*

Physiology.

A. D. Le Vay.

The author knows how to present his subject in an interesting manner.

He first tells what Physiology is, giving a brief history of the growth of its knowledge.

The next three chapters are on: The Anatomical Basis; The Biophysical Basis; and The Biochemical Basis of Physiology. This makes it much easier for the student to understand the following sections.

The functions of all the organs and parts of the body are so clearly explained that it is difficult to point to any chapter as being outstanding. I enjoyed reading those on "Respiration" and "The Nervous System."

Reproduction is treated in a simple yet lucid manner. The illustrations are good, well placed, and include a plan of the Autonomic Nervous System.

This is an excellent book. The author and the publishers are to be congratulated on its production.

N. D., S.R.N., M.B.C.N.

WHAT TO READ.

MEMOIRS AND BIOGRAPHY.

"Carts and Candlesticks." Alison Uttley.

"Mrs. Beeton and her Husband." Nancy Spain.

FICTION.

"Even as the Sun." Elizabeth D'Oyley.

"Parcel of Rogues." Jane Lane.

"The Three Brothers." Michael McLaverty.

"London Echoing." T. Bone.

"Catalina." W. Somerset Maugham.

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