

THE EDITOR'S LETTER-BOX.

[Correspondence on all subjects is invited, but we cannot in any way be responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents, who must give their name and address as a guarantee of good faith, but not necessarily for publication. Correspondents are reminded that brevity of style and conciseness of statement greatly facilitate early insertion.]

ASSOCIATION OF HOSPITAL MATRONS.

MISS COX DAVIES, the honorary secretary of the Association of Hospital Matrons, requests us to publish the following letter which has been sent to the Editor of the *British Journal of Nursing* :—

MADAM,—Our attention has been drawn to a paragraph appearing in this week's issue of the *British Journal of Nursing* headed: "Imitation is the Sincerest Form of Flattery." We write to inform you that the statement made therein—namely, that the constitution of the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland was used as a basis for that of the Association of Hospital Matrons—is incorrect, and it is to be regretted that this should not have been verified before publication. We now state, for your information, that though many members of this newly formed Association were doubtless at some period connected with the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland, the constitution of that Society was neither considered, mentioned, nor in the possession of any member of the committee dealing with this subject.

The inaccuracy of this statement is of little importance

to us, and our only reason for requesting you to correct it is, lest by our silence, we appear ungrateful to the president of the Scottish Matrons' Association, whose kind assistance in drafting the constitution of the Association of Hospital Matrons we have already most gratefully acknowledged. We note in the concluding paragraph the recommendation that membership with the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland should have been sought, rather than the formation of another Association with kindred aims. We, on our part, deeply regret the need for this action, adding only, that had the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland fulfilled the ideals of its great founder there would have been no necessity to call into existence at this moment a truly representative body—able for that reason to take action on behalf of their profession at this crisis in its history.

A copy of this letter has been sent to the nursing press.—We are, Madam, yours truly,

A. LLOYD STILL, *President.*

R. COX DAVIES, *Hon. Secretary.*

May 18, 1919.

THE WORKING HOURS OF THE PRIVATE NURSE.

To the Editor of THE HOSPITAL.

SIR,—At last someone has been sympathetic and brave enough to raise the question for discussion of the hours on duty of a private nurse—I refer to Miss Sheldon's letter in your issue of May 17. Up to this time, although there has been much written and much discussion about nurses' hours on duty, etc., the private nurses' interests in these respects have been entirely ignored—so much so that a visitor from Mars might imagine no such branch of nursing existed. This is surprising, seeing that the branch in question embraces such numbers of the profession. It also emphasises the importance of direct representation by private and district nurses on the Council of the College of Nursing. There is no doubt that it is a question that seems full of difficulties, and at times impossible of solution. I think it can only be solved by a bold move—viz., legislation for the hours of *all* nurses, no matter whether they be hospital, private, or district nurses. When it is thoroughly understood that a nurse is only *expected* to be on duty for a certain number of hours—say, eight or ten—many other difficulties will disappear. In private work much could be left to the nurse herself. No nurse worthy of the name would allow her patient to be left unattended during a dangerous or acute stage of illness, but after that period was over it would be quite possible for her to work her stipulated hours only, and many patients and doctors would be glad to help her to do this, knowing that she had willingly given extra time and care to her patient at a time when such close attention was really necessary. In many minor cases of illness the attention of a nurse for eight or ten hours is quite sufficient. I would suggest that all private nursing institutions should get their nurses under an eight or ten hour Bill, and for the rest trust the nurse to do her best where difficulties arise. Action of this sort would tend to bring out the spirit of the ministering angel, and would retain in as well as attract to this branch of the service some of the best workers.

Yours faithfully,

GERALDINE BREMNER.

22 Langham Street, Portland Place, W. 1, May 19, 1919.

To the Editor of THE HOSPITAL.

SIR,—The obvious reply to Miss Sheldon's question in the current number of *THE HOSPITAL* is: "Reform must first come from within." It is time the committees of the various trained nurses' institutions came to a definite and concerted resolution to revise not only the hours of work for their staffs but also their salaries.

In the country the sleeping difficulty seldom presents itself, in London it is the duty of the institutions to provide sleeping-quarters for their nurses, charging the usual fees paid by patients under these circumstances.

As to expensive railway fares, there are so many excellent co-operative societies now to be found in all large towns that patients in the surrounding districts can easily obtain *skilled* nursing without incurring the extra expense of fares for long journeys; moreover, patients who are in a position to pay the fees charged by London consultants have no excuse for the exploitation of the nursing profession. The alternative of being treated in a nursing home is always open to them, the fees range from five to sixteen guineas a week, exclusive of the use of the operating-theatre and additional bills for drugs and dressings.

If the public is given clearly to understand that the exploitation of the private nurse is no longer to be tolerated it will bring pressure to bear on the Government to an extent that will force the newly-created Ministry of Health to seriously consider the project of establishing paying hospitals to meet the needs of patients who are ineligible for admission into the wards of the voluntary hospitals and who are unable to pay private nursing and medical fees.

Surely never was there a more auspicious moment to launch a scheme which has been vaguely mooted for years; there are innumerable war hospitals, closed and closing, fitted with the most modern appliances, which could easily be adapted for civilian patients. Organised on a business footing, they would be self-supporting,