

## THE EDUCATION OF NURSES.

Sir,—Dr. Mildred M. Burgess calls attention in your issue of February 19th, p. 292, to the subject of the education of nurses and to the desirability of granting a diploma in nursing on the basis of an independent examination. I beg to state that, under the powers of a Royal Charter, the Royal British Nurses' Association has, since the year 1907, held independent examinations—written, oral, and practical—and granted diplomas to successful candidates.

The subject acquires additional importance from the fact that efforts are at the present time being made to place the training and certification of nurses on an organized basis. The powers for effecting that purpose have already been secured and are in operation.—I am, etc.,

London, W., Feb. 21st.

W. BEZLY THORNE, M.D.

## THE ALLEGED WASTE OF ARMY MEDICAL OFFICERS.

The following letter was published in the *Times* of Saturday, February 19th:

Sir,—I have recently had the opportunity of paying a prolonged visit to the British army in North France and Flanders in the company of a surgeon whose pioneer work in a particular department is as well known in the capital cities of our Central European foes as it is in the medical seats of learning of New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Before the outbreak of this Kultur-versus-democracy war I took an active part in the work of the St. John Ambulance Association and the British Red Cross Society, and had visited the head quarters of the Red Cross national organizations in Budapest, Vienna, and Berlin, whilst I enjoyed the great privilege of "doing my little bit" in the South African campaign; naturally, therefore, I was keenly interested to see how the Royal Army Medical Corps was performing its task of unforeseen and undreamt-of magnitude.

The primary object of the visit was to study a special point in the treatment of a particular class of injury in which one of us was interested, but fortunately we also had time and ample opportunity to investigate a question which is of quite a different character, which, from a national point of view, is more important and requires to be treated without bias, prejudice, or preconception. This matter was one which we had often heard discussed at home during the last few months, which appeared prominently in the press, and in regard to which we had heard and read statements of so definite a kind that we almost necessarily believed them to be true.

We shall be obliged, therefore, if you would afford us space to state that the statements as to the overstaffing of the medical units of the army in France seem to us to be quite unsupported by facts. We are of opinion that a perceptible reduction of the existing standard may in times of greater activity of "push" and counter-push lead to a condition which would lay the medical organization open to legitimate adverse criticism.

This opinion is founded on facts we had ample opportunity of gleaning for ourselves, since the primary object of our visit brought us into immediate contact not only with the regular officers of the Royal Army Medical Corps, but also with the numerous medical men until recently in civilian practice who hold temporary commissions in that corps, and now form the large bulk of the whole medical service in France. We thus not only saw things for ourselves, but heard the opinion of men who, despite the temptation to return home to look after their own practices, affairs, and personal comforts, continue to perform the duties which they have taken up.

We were thrilled with admiration at the existing perfection of the hospitals, both at the base and the front, and at the marvellous organization which exists throughout the vast medical service. Every detail is considered and seen to, and indeed any suggestions made were everywhere welcomed in the same spirit as one of us indicated in the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* not long after the outbreak of this war. It would be impossible in a letter of this kind to enumerate the thousand and one items which struck us as evidence of the businesslike capacity, spelling efficiency and economy, everywhere apparent.

Wherever we went we found under the varying conditions always the same admirable organization and the same high administrative standard for the prevention of disease, and for the treatment of our sick and wounded soldiers. The special departments which have been created for dealing with ophthalmic, dental, skin, and foot troubles complete an organization which is worthy of the highest and best traditions of the British race. It was a source of

pride and confidence to us, who have our only sons serving in the British army, to have at the end of our visit an opportunity to see at the General Head Quarters tables and graphic charts showing us at a glance how every detail is considered and controlled by the Director-General, Sir Arthur Sloggett.

As a member of the War Executive Committee of the British Red Cross Society, which is working in the closest association with the Order of St. John, it is not for me to praise the work which is being done by these two national organizations, but it is known that the aid they give in respect of hospitals and transport is a most valuable auxiliary.

I have the honour to remain yours faithfully,  
J. LYNN THOMAS, C.B., F.R.C.S.

P.S.—I have submitted this letter, with the exception of paragraph 1, to my friend in khaki, and he endorses every statement without reservation.

\*\* In a letter published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* for January 8th, 1916, and therefore written a good deal earlier, Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon Craig, A.M.C., deals with various causes which had prevented the members of the medical profession in Australia from enlisting even more freely than they have.

One of these, he said, was the statement that many medical men are idle at the hospitals in the war area. He called it a half truth, and therefore worse than a lie. "I have realized," he wrote, "that a military organization must be worked out on a maximum, and not a minimum basis, so that when the extraordinary call comes, it may not collapse. The whole history of the war shows big actions, alternating with periods of comparative inaction. During the latter, it is obvious that some men must be idle; but it is in their presence, in their readiness for emergency, that their military strength lies." Another lesson which, he said, must be learnt, was that every man must be ready to do any duty of a medical nature that the requirements of the service demanded. "If an opportunity arises for him to use his special gifts of training, such as that of surgeon or physician, so much the better; let him seize it. But if there is not that work, he must do uncomplainingly the ordinary work of military routine." Another cause of dissatisfaction mentioned was the fear that professional inferiors might occupy a higher position. "This," he wrote, "is bound to happen in a few isolated cases." Medical men are naturally independent, and their training develops that independence, but "as soon as it is realized that the authority is exercised in military matters only, the irksome feeling disappears. Sufficient freedom of thought and action is left to give scope to individuality. If the position is untenable it is always possible to transfer to another unit. In any case matters soon right themselves; the incompetent man is removed to a position more suited to him; and in a game of this sort, what matters it whether a man is captain or a colonel, so long as he serves his country? the rank does not make the man." As to another difficulty—the want of previous military training—he admits that it is real, and adds: "One month's training in the evening by a military instructor would give every medical man enough knowledge to 'carry on' his duties as a military officer. Schools for this purpose could be formed and organized by the local Branches of the British Medical Association."

## The Services.

## EXCHANGE DESIRED.

CAPTAIN, R.A.M.C.T.F. (civil hospital surgeon), at present in England serving as Medical Officer to Divisional Train, A.S.C., wishes to exchange with an officer in base hospital, or other appointment where surgical work is available, at home or abroad.—Address No. 850, BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL Office, 429, Strand, W.C.

PROFESSORS MARAGLIANO of Genoa and RUMMO of Naples, vice-presidents of the Italian Society of Internal Medicine, have issued an appeal for funds for the erection of a statue of the late Professor Baccelli to be placed in the Policlinico at Rome, in the foundation of which Baccelli took a leading part.

THE Cambridge University Press announces that it has become the agent in Great Britain for the *Journal of Cancer Research* (quarterly), the organ of the American Association for Cancer Research, and of the *Journal of Immunology* (bi-monthly), the organ of the American Association of Immunologists and the New York Society of Serology and Haematology. The subscription price for each journal is 23s.