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Contents.

EDITORIAL.—SPECIALISM IN NURSING	205
OBSTETRIC NURSING. BY OBSTETRICA, M.B.N.A....	207
PRACTICAL LESSONS IN ELECTRO-THERAPEUTICS. BY ARTHUR HARRIES, M.D., AND H. NEWMAN LAWRENCE, MEMBER INSTITUTION ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS	208
ON THE DIVISION OF LABOUR IN NURSING. BY WARRINGTON HAWARD, F.R.C.S., &c.	209
NURSING ECHOES. BY S. G.	213
WOMEN AND THEIR WORK. BY VEVA KARSLAND	215
"NURSING RECORD" BENEVOLENT FUND	216
REPLIES TO CORRESPONDENTS	216

EDITORIAL.

SPECIALISM IN NURSING.—I.

MR. WARRINGTON HAWARD has raised a question which, although it may appear at present to possess only a theoretical interest, is really of the most practical importance to the whole Nursing profession. In the paper recently read before the British Nurses' Association, and which we shall have pleasure in publishing in this journal so soon as the demands upon our space permit, Mr. Haward queried whether Nurses in the future would confine their attention to special classes of diseases or accidents, or whether each would be ready, as now, to take charge of any ordinary medical or surgical case—whether, in fact, each Nurse would tend to become a specialist, or continue to act as a general practitioner in Nursing.

This cannot be answered off-hand, nor any very definite assertion on the subject made, without considerable thought. We have frequently pointed out how close an analogy exists between the two callings of Medicine and Nursing, and so in this matter we may well investigate this question of specialism, as it has been developed

by Medical men. But immediately we are led to see how necessarily diverse are the conditions of the problem as it affects Doctors and Nurses. Because, on the one hand, we have a science practically illimitable in its scope, and, to commence with, comprising three great divisions of knowledge—Medicine, Surgery and Obstetrics; and although all three relate to the self-same organism—the human body—and all three commingle at many points, yet the boundaries of each are ever separately enlarging. And Nursing recognises the same threefold division, but just as its sphere of knowledge is vastly less, so its scope of work is commensurately restricted.

If one might be permitted to be epigrammatic, one would say that Nursing implies the care of the patient; Medicine, the cure of the disease. From which it clearly follows that the work of the Nurse is infinitely more simple than that of the Doctor, because hers is based upon a clearly defined and definable knowledge, whereas every advance in science tends to enlarge his insight into the mysteries of nature. In consequence of this immensity of the field, we find that for the last three hundred years there has existed in England a well-marked distinction between the Physician and the Surgeon, the former taking precedence because in the sixteenth century the art of Medicine had so far progressed that the Royal College of Physicians was incorporated by Henry the Eighth. Surgeons and Barbers, however, remained united together in one guild for another century and a-half, when the anomaly became too marked, and they separated, to the immediate decadence of the latter craft, and the establishment of the former under the title of the Royal College of Surgeons. Almost contemporaneously arose the guild of the Apothecaries, and coming to the earlier years of the present century we find Parliament conferring

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)