

Annotations.

VICTORIA COMMEMORATION PENSION FUND.

THE *Irish Times* has expressed its readiness to receive and acknowledge contributions to a Pension Fund of the above name, founded for the benefit of the Irish nurses in commemoration of the great 60th year. Our contemporary takes for granted that it is a matter of common knowledge that Irish nurses are "taught strictly to obey orders," are "invaluable in cases of illness," are "the right hand of the surgeon and of the physician," are "noble and self-sacrificing," that they "splendidly fulfil arduous duties," and that "all who have employed them are aware of the excellent services that they render," but it is also admitted that the remuneration which their skilled services can command is insufficient to allow them to subscribe to the Royal National Pension Fund, the payment of the annual subscription to which often drains heavily, we are well aware, the resources of the more highly-paid English nurses.

That the Irish nurse described above should not be in a position to save sufficient for a competence in an honourable old age affords food for thought to all those interested in the question of remedying the present inadequate payment for women's labour; but the fact remains that Irish nurses must either look forward to a future in which destitution and starvation are before them when they can no longer work for their living, or provision must be made for them by public subscription. This being the case we have no hesitation in saying that until the possibility of earning a living wage is accorded to them, nurses who are past work should be entitled to receive, and should have no compunction in accepting, a pension from a national fund; for services rendered. A Cabinet Minister can retire upon a pension to which the nation holds him to be justly entitled, and there is no reason why nurses should not be provided for in the same way. At the same time we confess we would rather see a scheme started for supplementing the savings which could be made by nurses who are unable to afford the ordinary premiums payable to ordinary insurance offices for a deferred annuity, in order that all fully-trained private nurses should receive sufficient to live upon when past active work. In this way the nurses would become self-dependent, and self-respecting, and would not have to rely in their old age upon support from a charitable public.

EAST LONDON NURSING SOCIETY.

THIS society, which is affiliated to the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses, has done excellent work during the past year. It has upon its nursing staff three matrons, and thirty-

three nurses, and their work lies, as the name of the society indicates, in some of the poorest districts of the Metropolis. Nursing is undertaken in thirty-two parishes. Originally, each nurse lived in rooms in the parish which she served, but all who have the interests of nurses at heart, and who know what discomfort is entailed in living alone in lodgings, in a poor neighbourhood, on an income of £60 or £70 a year (which the report states "will fully maintain a nurse according to length of service, and the cost of furnished lodgings") will rejoice to hear that the Lady Algernon Gordon Lennox has given the society the free use of a house on Stepney Green, and that it is to be used as a nursing centre. This is a much needed improvement, but at present only two matrons and two nurses live there. It is much to be hoped, therefore, that this plan may be extended, so that all the nurses may have comfortable central homes to which to return after their arduous duties are over for the day, instead of being harassed by anxieties as to ways and means, or becoming run down by living on cheap and unappetising food. No doubt this excellent society is hampered by the difficulty of obtaining sufficient funds, which so often bars the way to needed improvements. We hope therefore that the present year may see the nurses of the East London Nursing Society provided with central homes as a tribute to the nation's honour of its Sovereign, and a mark of appreciation of the work of the nurses, in whom she has shown such a kindly interest.

A MINIMUM FEE.

WE have recently heard of a case in which an excellent nurse returned to the institution from which she had been sent out, because the relatives of her patient had been able to obtain from a well-known co-operative society the services of another nurse for one guinea instead of two. A case in point is thus brought to our notice of the way in which one institution may undersell another, and so obtain its cases. We are aware that the question of supplying nurses to the middle classes, at a fee which they can afford to pay, is one which demands attention, but it cannot be conceded that this should be done by reducing the fee which the nurse receives. If private nursing institutions desire to help patients, they should, in our opinion, obtain charitable funds from which the payments made by patients, who are unable to afford the full fee of two guineas a week, could be supplemented, but the nurse should always receive her full fee, and the business and philanthropy of institutions should be kept quite distinct, otherwise they end in injustice to their nurses, and in injustice to other institutions, by underselling them and so annexing their work.

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