

THE
BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 749.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 9, 1902.

Vol. XXIX.

Editorial.

THE INCIDENT OF WEALTH.

The high plane of efficiency to which the practical art of the care of the sick has now been raised by our modern nurse training-schools has had the effect of attracting to them women who are not compelled to undertake this service by the necessity for earning their bread, but who, realising the satisfaction of such a life, and desiring to be of some use to their kind, are willing and wishful to submit themselves to the discipline and restrictions of years of hospital training in order that they may attain this end. There appears to be a feeling on the part of many nurses that women who have private means are not justified in entering the nursing profession, and thus decreasing the number of posts obtainable by those who are obliged to support themselves. The incident of the possession of means is, however, not one which should be a factor in the case at all. It would be as unfair to disqualify a woman who appears a suitable candidate as a probationer on the ground that she has money, as it would be to let this fact weigh in her selection for any given post. The possession of money is not held to be a disqualification in a man for his entrance into a profession, and we see no reason why it should be so regarded in the case of women. But there is another side of the question which it is equally important should receive prominence. If it is inadmissible to exclude women with means from entering a profession for which they show themselves suited, they on their side have a duty towards their colleagues who depend for their maintenance upon their skilled work. It is therefore quite inadmissible to accept salaries which do not afford a living wage. Such an action affects not an individual nurse alone, but the whole profession of which she is a member; the market value of nursing labour is thereby depreciated, and it becomes

harder to other nurses to earn a sufficient salary. Again, nurses with private means should be specially scrupulous not to use this fact to influence their appointment to positions which they desire to obtain. Not only is it one of the worst forms of snobbery to plead the possession of money as a qualification for a post to which professional competence should be the only passport, but it is the height of meanness, and shows a condition of mind, and a standard of professional ethics, which are greatly to be deprecated and condemned.

Put plainly, such an action stands thus: Two candidates are running one another closely for a post; one of these, casting about for points in her favour, intimates to the committee that money is no object with her, and, if appointed, she is prepared to discharge the duties of the office without a salary. This is to take an unjustifiable advantage. If the first candidate really desires to benefit the institution, she can, if appointed, expend the salary she receives on its behalf, but to urge that money is no consideration to her is to act unjustly to a colleague whose professional qualifications may be as good or better than her own, but to whom a salary is essential.

It is well that these points should be considered, for evil is wrought by want of thought as well as want of heart. Moreover, if nurses with means were always scrupulous in this respect, fewer objections would probably be raised as to their admission to the profession.

It has been said that we women expect too much, and that while a man is content, if his occupation is honest and remunerative, to take his pleasure out of business hours, women expect their work to be soul-satisfying also. Possibly the popularity of nursing as a profession is due to the fact that it affords an outlet for that tenderness which it is the delight of the best women to lavish. The quality is one which should be cherished, wherever found, by the heads of nurse training schools.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)