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Editorial.

A SIDE ISSUE.

The flagrant mismanagement of the "Alexandra Nursing Home," Tollington Park, in connection with which a fine of £20 was imposed upon the proprietress, as we reported in a recent issue, has aroused considerable attention as to the condition of many so-called Nursing Homes, and the suggestion which we advanced some time since, as to the desirability of licensing such Homes, is beginning to find support in the lay Press. It seems, therefore, well to point out that the licensing of Nursing Homes is only a side issue which is involved in the larger question of the regulation of the nursing profession. Before satisfactory legislation with regard to these Homes can be enacted it is necessary to define what qualifications must be possessed by the proprietors of such institutions. It would seem a truism to say that they must be fully qualified nurses, were we not at once confronted with the fact that no standard of nurse training has as yet been authoritatively defined. Hence any person with an inadequate training, or with no training at all, is able, purely as a matter of speculation, to open a so-called Nursing Home. Such a person will, in the large majority of cases, desire to reduce the cost of nursing to the minimum amount in order that her balance of profit may attain to a maximum sum. The result is that women who are inadequately trained, or who are personally unsuited for nursing work, are employed in large numbers to care for the sick, who, be it noted, pay fees which should ensure to them the attendance of fully-trained nurses. The first essential in the reform of the condition of Nursing Homes, which we are aware is a crying evil, is that they should be superintended by experienced nurses; it follows that the registration of duly-qualified nurses must be undertaken by the State, so that the public may be able to discriminate between trained

and untrained women. At present they have no opportunity of exercising such discrimination, and many are the pitfalls laid for the unwary.

Should it be asserted that the public should ask their nurses for the evidence of hospital training afforded by a certificate, we must further inquire, what evidence they have of the value of any given certificate? Every training-school is at present a law to itself, and certificates are floating about which represent periods of training varying from six months to three years, but in each case the possessor is described as a certificated nurse.

The unorganised condition of nursing at the present day is a serious menace to the sick public, and it is more than time that the State called into existence a Nursing Council, which shall lay down a minimum qualification for trained nurses, as the General Medical Council does for medical men, and shall be charged with the duty of publishing a register of women who have attained this standard, and who alone shall have the right to term themselves trained nurses. Until this is done the public will continue to suffer from the commercial speculator, the untrained and the unfit. It will be realised, therefore, that legislation, to be effective, must deal not only with Nursing Homes, but with the whole nursing question, and, as a preliminary to legislation is, as a rule, a Parliamentary inquiry, let all who are dissatisfied with the present unorganised condition of nursing concentrate their energies upon obtaining such an inquiry into the whole nursing question. That objections will be advanced by those who for various reasons do not desire the regulation of our profession by the State we are well aware. Most thoughtful and fair-minded people, however, and more especially those who realise the grave risks to which the sick are subjected by the lack of any minimum nursing qualification, would welcome action to attain this end.

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