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## Editorial.

### PROFESSIONAL INDEPENDENCE.

From time to time, in discussing questions of nursing organisation, we have taken occasion to propound what we believe should be the bed-rock principle in every society of nurses, so far as its finances are concerned, namely, that its expenditure must be kept within the limits of its income, and that the latter shall be provided solely by the nurses themselves. There are now a large number of nursing societies in this country, and it is very noteworthy that, with few exceptions, they are managed by nurses themselves, and that every one of those societies is financially safe because its income is greater than its expenditure. The members of such societies, therefore, not only preserve their self-respect, but also entire liberty of action; and the work they are doing is excellent and progressive. To conclusively prove how essentially important to nurses, and how closely connected these principles are, it is only necessary to note the present condition of the Royal British Nurses' Association. It is well known that for the first six years of its existence that Society was managed for the benefit of nurses, by the well-known Matrons and nurses who founded it. During those years it succeeded in everything which it touched, even in the face of the greatest opposition; and it accumulated more than £1,000, and was thus enabled to defray all the heavy expenses incurred in the fight for its Royal Charter. Then the scene changed, and those who had founded and worked the Association so successfully were pushed aside by those who had done nothing previously to assist in the work. It is a matter of common knowledge that very few well-trained nurses will join it now, that the numbers of those who did so at first are dwindling year by year. So that, whereas ten years ago there were nearly 3,000 members on its Roll, the audited accounts show that the

numbers of annual subscriptions have fallen from 1,329 in 1901 to 1,162 in the last twelve months. The accounts further show that in the last two years the annual subscriptions have diminished by no less than 10 per cent., whilst the life subscriptions have lessened by more than one-third; and the registration fees have fallen from £170 to £102. The Association, in fact, is at the present time only maintained in existence by donations from the public, which last year amounted to nearly one-third of the income of the Association. Various speakers at the recent annual meeting of the Association pretended to be surprised that the nurses, and especially the leading Matrons, of the country do not come forward to join the Association and assist it in its work. Although it is somewhat difficult to accept such surprise as genuine, we would, for the sake of our argument, treat it gravely, and assure the gentlemen in question, once more, that neither the public nor the medical profession approve of the manner in which nurses have been ousted out of the management of their own Association, and especially when the result has been the practical ruin of that Association for the time being. Until the few medical men who are now controlling the Association realise the false and impossible position in which they stand, and retire from it, the rank and file of the nursing profession will decline to take any interest in its proceedings. Trained nurses will not permit themselves to be made objects of public charity, and, as self-respecting women, they consider that a nursing society which does not pay its own expenses is not worthy of professional or public confidence. And, finally, they consider that the very least that can be done by those who profess to manage the Association is that they should cheerfully pay its expenses. It is very undignified but, in the present instance, it is very characteristic, that those who call the tune should publicly grumble when they are expected to pay the piper.

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