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Editorial.

THE NURSING OF COLOURED PATIENTS.

The Legislative Assembly of Natal have agreed to a resolution to the effect that the employment of European women in attendance on coloured or native male patients in Government hospitals must cease, and that in the case of those other hospitals which decline to accede to this condition contributions from the public purse shall be withheld. The Colonial Secretary endeavoured to obtain some modification of the terms of the resolution, but Mr. Richards, the member who proposed the resolution, succeeded in carrying it.

So far it has been the glory of the trained nurse that she has carried skilled care to all who may be in need of it, without distinction of creed, colour or sex, without requiring any personal qualities in the sick person, save only that he needs her services. Whether working in the wards of workhouse infirmaries, or amongst the Kentish hop-pickers in this country, in the plague-stricken camps of India, or amongst native races in foreign lands, she has freely rendered her services to all who require them, and we have no hesitation in saying that the testimony of any nurse worthy of her calling is that by so doing she has gained the respect of all classes; and it is not too much to say that by the object-lessons she has given she has conveyed to those who have come under her care a new and high conception of the dignity of womanhood, and the nobility of woman's work.

It remains to be seen what action will be taken by the hospital authorities in Natal, and by the trained nurses themselves. In the case of those hospitals which are not under Government control they would be well-advised to decline to accept contributions from the public purse coupled with the present condition, and we do not believe that even financially they would be the losers, while they would unmis-

takably show the Government of Natal that they had a due appreciation of their responsibility to the sick.

In regard to trained nurses themselves, we think the regulation will have the effect of excluding from the ranks of those who seek employment in the Colony the class of woman whose services it is most desirable to secure, and so the injustice of their attitude towards the native community will come home to the white population.

Commenting on the resolution, the *Times of Natal* says:—"It seems difficult to understand why the skilled and kindly ministrations of a nurse should have the effect of lowering her in the estimation of a native patient, but a number of members of the Assembly, speaking presumably from knowledge, contend that this is the case. Certainly of recent years the native has ceased to show to European women the respect which he formerly showed, and anything which tends to remove social barriers, which also act as mutual safeguards, should be discouraged." We appreciate the difficulty our contemporaries find in understanding why the ministrations of a nurse should lower her in the estimation of a native patient, and we have no hesitation in saying this is not the effect produced, unless it be in those cases where a woman has mistaken her vocation, and where her own personal qualities are such as would lower her in the estimation of a patient of whatever colour. That this is the exception, not the rule, amongst the recognised members of our profession will be generally admitted; indeed, so rare is it to find a nurse who does not command the respect of the sick to whom she ministers that we can only regard the action of the Legislative Assembly of Natal as a slur on the nurses of the Colony, assuming, as it does, that contact with them has had the effect of lowering the respect felt by the natives for white women.

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