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Editorial.

THE NURSING OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES.

It is with great pleasure we learn that a philanthropist has volunteered to provide the necessary capital for establishing a home or homes for visiting nurses to attend upon patients of the middle classes in their own houses, just as the nurses of the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute at present attend upon the poor.

The scheme, if carried into effect, will benefit a class of persons to whom it is difficult to offer or give any effective aid in the ordinary way; and who need it quite as much as many of the poor who bear the outward and visible signs of poverty. The effort to maintain outward appearances on an empty larder and a bank balance which has so shrunk that it can scarcely be said to exist, involves quite as much suffering as the poverty of classes lower in the social scale, who, when times are prosperous, have their spells of comparative affluence, but who, as a rule, make no attempt at provision for a rainy day.

Those possessed of a small but regular income, on the contrary, often live sparingly and deny themselves continuously in days of health to make some small provision for sickness and old age. When this time comes the tiny nest egg shrinks all too quickly; it needs a considerable sum to meet the expenses of a long illness if the patient is to have efficient medical and nursing care, and the nourishment which is all-important to a good recovery.

We can scarcely conceive any greater kindness than for the possessor of wealth to step in at such a crisis and provide skilled nursing care for poorer middle-class patients. To the families of clergy, struggling to maintain appearances on a minute income, and probably to keep up a house out of all proportion to their means; to the small tradesman, already burdened with business worries in these days of increasing competition; to clerks whose pay is always

meagre, and whose appearance must be respectable if they are to retain their situations—the appearance of the skilled nurse at such a crisis would be a boon which can hardly be overrated. The endower of such a scheme would without doubt have high interest for his money in the good it is able to effect, and, we may hope, in the gratitude and thanks of those benefited.

The rich, if they choose, can insist that the nurses whom they employ shall have an adequate professional education, followed by registration by the State. If they do not insist on this measure of protection, but pay for the services of ignorant women the sum which would ensure to them skilled attention, that is their affair.

The lines on which the sick poor should be nursed in their own homes are amply indicated by the organisation of the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute. But the middle classes, to whom the employment of a nurse at £2 2s. a week for any length of time is a financial impossibility, and who do not come within the scope of the splendid work of the Jubilee Institute, are at present very inadequately provided for, and their case is often an extremely hard one.

We therefore welcome the announcement made above. At the same time, we cannot hope that any philanthropic provision can meet the need of all middle-class patients. The best solution of the difficulty lies in co-operative association between members of the class concerned with the object of ensuring for themselves trained nursing when necessary. We may refer those interested in the subject to an article on "The Nursing of Middle Class Patients," read by Miss Margaret Breay, Hon. Secretary of the Matrons' Council, at its first Annual Conference, printed in the *NURSING RECORD* of July 9th, 1898, and to a paper from the same pen in the *Charity Organisation Review* in that year. These papers sum up the position briefly and clearly.

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