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Editorial.

A SENSE OF HONOUR.

One of the most important traits which should characterise all the actions of a nurse in her relations to her patients is a keen sense of honour, and more especially perhaps is this necessary in the case of private nurses who are admitted into closest relations with strangers and a confidential knowledge of family matters.

There is no doubt as to the right standpoint for a nurse in regard to all that concerns the illness and the private affairs of a patient. Her position resembles most nearly that of the clergyman and the doctor, and her attitude should be the same as theirs. The man or woman troubled by any weighty matter opens his grief to his spiritual adviser, assured that the confidence will be treated as sacred; the patient speaks with the utmost openness to his medical adviser because he believes that not a word will be breathed outside the consulting room, and right honourably do the clergy and the medical profession respond to the confidence reposed in them. It is just as incumbent on the trained nurse that when the door of a private house closes behind her it should close on all she knows of the family within, and that her silence concerning its members and their affairs should be as profound as that of the clergyman and the physician. We wish we could think this was invariably the case. That many nurses are strictly honourable in this respect we are well aware, but that there are others who are not may readily be learnt in the course of a drive on the top of an omnibus, and in many other public places. Such things should not be, and before probationers enter the wards of a hospital

they should be impressed at the outset of their nursing career with the responsibilities involved in the profession they are adopting and the obligations which it lays upon them. To indulge in gossip may be a comparatively harmless failing in an ordinary individual. In a nurse it is a serious fault, and should be treated as such. In relation to the claim of trained nurses to rank as members of a profession a contemporary justly points out that this claim involves a higher ethical standard than is usually attached to a word which implies simply working for what can be got out of a given calling. And "among the first principles of any system of ethics which applies to a profession so highly important and personally sacred as that of the nurse in its best estate is that which relates to confidence. Nothing short of the highest sense of honour will do—and no such sense of honour is at all satisfied by going out of a house of ministrations to retail to other persons what has happened there." The family are entitled to the courtesy of silence from one who has occupied the position of nurse in the household.

Lastly, although something may be done during a nurse's training to develop a sense of honour, it will be readily conceded that it is not likely to reach its highest development in those in whom it has remained latent until that time. It should be cultivated from earliest childhood, and its instinctive possession is one of those good gifts passed on to their descendants by forebears, who, in their generation, have lived high principled and honourable lives. All of which goes to prove the responsibility of the trust exercised by Matrons in the selection of probationers.

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