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EDITORIAL.

THE TRAINED NURSES ECONOMIC LEAGUE.

It is a fundamental principle that for the stability of any body of workers, and for the establishment of just economic conditions, co-operation between its members is required.

This lesson has been impressed upon trained nurses during the present war by the fact that the economic condition of nursing has been largely determined by members of the medical profession, that is to say by the Army Medical Department, which has evolved a scheme to meet the present military necessities, which must have a prejudicial effect upon nursing in the future, as the whole education, discipline, and remuneration of nurses, trained and in training, has been disrupted.

Further the whole press of the country has been utilized in advocating this scheme, upon the statement that, in the near future, there will be a shortage of nursing skill available for the sick and wounded, and that therefore the employment of paid unskilled help is a necessity. There is no doubt that, with such an abnormal number of invalids requiring trained nursing, careful organization was necessary, and the Army Medical Department would have been wise if it had conferred with the nursing profession, as it has done with the medical profession, on this matter, and if the Nursing Board at the War Office had compiled carefully tabulated statistics as to the number of trained nurses available.

It must be realized in this connection that the flat rate of pay of £1 1s. a week for nurses in military auxiliary hospitals has excluded the private nursing branch from this patriotic service, unless it is content to work for half the market value of skilled nursing. Hundreds of private nurses

are willing to do this, and are so employed. But before estimating the extent of the shortage of skilled nurses the thousands, engaged in private work, who are unable to work at half price, should have been taken into consideration. Many of them would willingly work in military hospitals if they could conscientiously divest themselves of their financial obligations. But those acquainted with private nurses know well how many of them have incurred financial responsibilities in connection with those dear to them, which honour and affection compel them to fulfil.

To prove whether private nurses are available for work in military hospitals, if employed at their ordinary fees, we propose to compile a roll of such nurses holding certificates of three years' training in a general hospital, who are between the ages of 25 and 45, and who are willing to offer their services to the War Office at the rate of £2 2s. a week. We have no desire to interfere with the freedom of action of other nurses, whether voluntary or salaried workers, but we claim that the great body of private nurses should not be excluded from rendering invaluable national service simply because the Government has elected to ignore the market value of their skill.

On page v. of our advertisement columns will be found a form which eligible private nurses are asked to fill up, sign, and forward to the address given. This entails no obligations, but is, in the first instance, only intended as a test of the number available under the above conditions, and we invite the co-operation of Superintendents of private nursing institutions, to enable us to compile a list which will be of real value.

It is proposed to form a League of Nurses to consider and secure just economic conditions for the Nursing Profession of which full particulars will be given in this JOURNAL at an early date.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)