

stand aloof from the Association; and the Committee would strongly urge upon all nurses, to whom such advice may be given, to weigh it very carefully before consenting to act upon it. Among male workers, whether in the most highly skilled professions or in the humblest trades, the experience of many years has fully proved *that combination is a source of great advantages; and of these advantages there can be no good reason why women should be deprived.* It is unfortunately true that the interests of employers and of the employed cannot always, and at all points, be the same; and even the most benevolent and considerate of employers are not entirely free from a tendency to think that their own opinions or convenience should of necessity prevail in every case of difference. It is seldom easy to look at any question from the point of view of others whom it may concern; and hence it need occasion no surprise if a few among the employers of nurses are found to attach comparatively small importance to the legitimate wishes of the nurses themselves, or even to entertain some fear lest a powerful Association should diminish competition, should insist upon privileges or rates of payment which can easily be refused to the isolated demands of individuals, or should generally tend to place nurses in a position which might compel the modification of some existing arrangements. There is even a rumour that the authorities of some institutions intend to set up little registration schemes of their own, in antagonism to a general one, and thus to provoke rivalry between the nurses who have been taught and "registered" at this place or at that. It is to be hoped that the good sense of nurses themselves will enable them to see the inevitable tendency of proceedings of this kind, and will prevent them from suffering the strength which they might derive from union to be split up and frittered away. The question is now entirely in their own hands. The present opportunity of entering into combination, if lost or neglected, is not likely, for a long while, to recur under conditions equally favourable; and nurses may be quite sure that, if they determine to avail themselves of it, they will be cordially supported by public opinion. Their example, in that case, will certainly be followed in other departments of female industry; and they will have the merit, not only of helping themselves, but also of assisting to place other working women in a better position than that which they now occupy.

Any further information, or forms of application for membership, can be obtained by writing to the Hon. Secretaries, British Nurses' Association, 20, Upper Wimpole Street, London, W.

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COMPETITIVE PRIZE ESSAY.

ON "THE RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE SISTER, STAFF-NURSE, AND PROBATIONER, AND WHAT THEIR HOURS OF DUTY AND WORK SHOULD SEVERALLY BE IN A PROPERLY ORGANISED WARD OF THIRTY BEDS."

By MISS ANNIE BLISSETT.

THE Sister should hold the undoubted headship of her ward, being responsible for its appearance and comfort, the conduct of her nurses; and the thoroughness of their work. She should be an educated gentlewoman, capable of inspiring confidence and respect; fully trained in all the duties of nursing; holding a high standard of morality; and of a just and impartial temper. She should commence duty by reading prayers in the ward at eight o'clock, and be free to retire to her room after instructing the night-nurse at nine in the evening, ready and willing, however, to be applied to, in any case of special necessity. One, in very deed, of the noble men and women who go about in the bye-ways of life, often unnoticed and unknown, go with their lives in their hands, to minister to the sick and the suffering, with no thought but that they are answering to the simple call of duty; though some of them see beyond the dirt and disease, and realise that this one, or that, is perhaps numbered among the "little ones" of whom the Master spoke. And their touch grows gentler, and their voice softer, at the thought that perhaps He is watching by wretched beds of straw, and it brings some of the "light that never shone on land or sea" into the bending face.

In the ward the Sister should give medicines, superintend and assist the nurse with the dressings, accompany the medical officer on his rounds, and receive all his instructions, retain charge of all poisons, alcohol, linen, stores, and dressings, serve the dinners, and write the diet lists of the patients; deciding all disputed questions not within the province of the medical officer and matron, to whom she should be as ready to render obedience, as to require it from her subordinates. She should endeavour to instruct those under her, in all branches of nursing, and be always ready with a kindly word of praise for work well done, which often stimulates a tired and flagging spirit more than the giver would deem possible. Particularly should the Sister see that every instruction of the medical officers be carefully carried out; and with a strict impartiality, aiding all in every way by example as well as precept. She should personally visit each bed, and inquire into the condition of her patients, training herself (for training is never finished) to acute observation, and learning to discern between fancied suffering and real. If the ward be a surgical one

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