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Editorial.

Why No Nurses ?

HERE WE ARE WELL INTO 1952, nearly four years since the Appointed Day, when the State became responsible for hospitals and the nurses who work therein; and nearly ten years since the first hally-baloo was created about the "dreadfully hard lives" young nurses were forced to live. Astounding revelations regarding the inhumanity of Matrons and the frustrated sex-starved Ward Sisters were then hauled out of the intimate secrecy of hospitals and flaunted before the eyes of an avid public.

Banner headlines were certainly responsible for bringing in some much needed reforms and the columns of the leading dailies allowed much hot air to be freely ventilated, but unfortunately—nothing that has yet been said or done—has brought about a flood of applicants from intelligent young women who wish to be trained as nurses.

Now it ought to be fully understood that without NURSES, the National Health Service is doomed to failure. Hospital wards will close down, one by one, inexorably, if no nurses are forthcoming to tend the sick. It will not matter one jot or tittle whether there are specialists or general practitioners; brilliant group secretaries to Hospital Management Committees; or wizards of finance officers; many or few clerks; domestic assistants and so on. NURSES at work at the bedside of patients will spell success or failure for the Health Service.

Hospital authorities and Management Committees are well aware of this great truth, and they have promptly set about the task of recruiting nurses with vigour—if not with too much intelligence. They have advertised widely and laid great emphasis on the material benefits and amenities for leisure hours which await students of nursing, such as increased salaries, shortened hours of work, the number of dances held in hospitals, swimming pools with under-water lighting, gorgeous mansions in the country, tennis courts and so on. In addition to offering to pay examination fees, some Hospital Management Committees actually go so far as to pay the nurses a sum of money for passing their examinations!! Unbelievable—yet true!

Do all these gifts and extravagances attract our intelligent young womanhood to take up nursing? Not a bit of it. They are apparently bored to tears by the ardour with which they are wooed, and probably suspicious of the good things offered. They wonder what conditions are cloaked by such artless generosity!!

Why should lengthy leisure and pleasure be paraded before the sceptical eyes of our young women in order

to attract them to a dignified life of service to their less fortunate fellowmen? Naturally swimming, dancing and sport in the open air are necessary to maintain the good health of any person—whatever their occupation or profession, but one does not notice these amenities being monotonously displayed in order to catch the aspirants to other professions!

Has not the time come when we should boldly tell the truth and warn young women that some sacrifice is necessary in order to make good nurses. After all, our British girls possess guts and grit, whilst adventure and hardship call to the highest that is within them. When Mr. Churchill called for "blood, sweat, and tears," the response was overwhelming, as he knew it would be, for he had correctly estimated the British character. Neither was it only a fear of death involved, as some people stated.

Sacrifice is no new experience for anyone. Everybody has to make sacrifices every day in order to live peaceably with their neighbour. Two sharing a flat, families sharing a house, and even married people must sacrifice some of their own personal convenience and comfort in order to rub along together and remain happy.

Therefore our young women should be warned that nursing is not easy; that it calls for character, self-sacrifice and limitless patience. That the training for such an exacting profession is hard, requiring implicit obedience, physical endurance, willingness to learn and to have certain faults corrected. In such a way of life young women may freely practise the Corporal works of Mercy, and be paid in this world (and also in the next) for so doing.

Happiness is a state of mind which is bought at great cost. Giving willing service to one's fellow creatures is the surest and quickest way of attaining happiness, and it is nursing which offers such countless opportunities for giving this priceless service.

The profession of nursing, by providing such wonderful opportunities for strengthening character and broadening one's outlook, by giving an ethical and professional education free of cost, by bestowing a career for life in such useful and self-satisfying work and by bringing an assured status with financial independence, ought not to have to bribe its aspirants with cheap baubles such as tennis courts and monthly dances and endless leisure and pleasure.

The time has come to put British nursing back on to its pedestal. Its advantages and rewards should be reserved for the pick of our intelligent young women, who are willing to train and compete with pride and ambition for the favours it has to bestow upon them. Amenities and little luxuries should be looked upon as the normal and must be provided without undue

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