

cries from time to time, chiefly from those who are as supremely ignorant of the subject as of the first and most immutable principles of Political Economy. The value of labour, as of every other market commodity, is precisely what it will fetch. For various reasons, which we will not now discuss, two guineas a week represents rather above than below the average commercial value of a Private Nurse's services. The public has been trained not, as a rule, to pay more; in many instances it pays much less.

The balance between supply and demand practically in Nursing, as in all other matters, ultimately determines prices. If Nurses continue for another ten years to be trained at the present rate; if the British Nurses' Association has not long before then attained its objects, set a State seal on the efficient, and prevented ignorant women undertaking a Nurse's duties, only one thing is certain—the thousands of women who will then be clamouring for work will inevitably attempt to undersell each other in the sheer struggle for their daily bread, and as inevitably will the salaries paid to Nurses fall lower and lower. We have long foreseen this result, and therefore have for this—amongst many other reasons—supported the British Nurses' Association with all our strength, and counselled every eligible Nurse, for her own sake, as well as for the welfare of her profession, at once to join its ranks.

But this *en passant*. At present, no Private Nurse is likely to earn more than £100 per annum—the average is, we believe, very much less. When it is remembered that the Proprietary Institution has to meet great expenses—in Rent, Rates, and Taxes, Advertisements, and Sustentation—it becomes evident that the profit to be derived can only be large, if it employs a large staff of Nurses on the one hand, and pays them individually small salaries on the other. The employées of such an Institution derive an advantage on their side, in being boarded, lodged, and cared for, whether at work or not. If they derive small profits, at least they are certain, and they are saved all responsibility.

Formerly, Nursing Homes were almost exclusively of this class, but within the last few years—with the improvement, not only in the work, but also in the character of the workers—more liberal views have prevailed, and the second class of Institution has become more common, the managers finding the work, providing the Home accommodation, and participating on a fixed scale in the Nurses' earnings. This, of course, is in every way more advantageous to the Nurse, and in our judgment hitherto has been the plan best adapted to meet her wants. It provides her with

employment, which, if she were dependent on her own exertions, in many instances she would not be able to procure; when out of work, with a settled Home, where she can always find congenial society, comfort in health, and care in sickness; and with a fair return for her labour.

Some months ago, when discussing an analogous subject, we pointed out that the only other plan whereby this state of affairs could be bettered was, it appeared to us, by a kind of Co-operative Union amongst Private Nurses, who should provide for themselves a local habitation, and share the expenses, and the profits, of their work. For it must be remembered under how many and great disadvantages those Nurses live who form the class which we have named Independent. Each lives probably alone, is entirely dependent for employment on the recommendation of one or more Doctors. While she is at work, she makes more than her sisters under Institution rule; but if she is not nursing, it costs her more to live. Then, again, whether she is employed or not, she probably has to continue paying rent for her room. The engrossing character of her daily life precludes her from making, or maintaining, many friendships. And so it comes to pass, that when she leaves a case she generally returns, exhausted in mind and body, to her one or two, cold, cheerless rooms, and in the reaction from the bustle and excitement of fighting disease, feels her solitude and utter loneliness still more depressing. Then for days and weeks she may be in enforced idleness, consuming her earnings; or, on the contrary, coming home from one long and exhausting case, she may straightway be called away to another, and still more trying one. Small wonder, therefore, that there are comparatively few Independent Nurses, and that many who attempt the *rolé*, sooner or later find the burden too heavy to bear alone, and seek relief from financial responsibility, and from enervating solitude, by joining one of the bands of Institutional Nurses.

Now, it appears to us that the scheme which Miss Wood propounds in our columns this week meets at once, and most fully, the wants of the Independent Nurses. As we understand it, there would be a certain number of these, whose names would be enrolled as permanent supporters of a distinctive Hotel. When away they would pay no rent, but all the letters, messages, and parcels which arrived for them would be forwarded immediately and safely to them—an enormous advantage. On their return from a case—by giving, we presume, some short notice—they would find a bedroom ready for them, and congenial acquaintances perhaps to welcome them; comfortable sitting and dining-rooms, where they could find recreation now beyond their reach, and meals at prices

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