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Editorial.

A BAD PRECEDENT.

IN the public mind the fact that neither Miss Hibbard the Superintendent of Nursing nor any of the Nursing Sisters are returning in the *Maine* on her second voyage to South Africa unquestionably depreciates the value of their work, and not only of their work, but also of that of women nurses generally, on hospital ships. That this is the case is patent from the tone of the press when dealing with the subject. for it not unnaturally assumed that had the services of Miss Hibbard and the nursing sisters been of great value they would have been retained, or other women would have been appointed in their place. But against this assumption, natural as it is, we desire in the interests of the sick, and of women nurses, to protest. There is no doubt that experience has proved, and that medical men are ready to maintain, that women are able to bring into the sick room, in addition to their technical skill, certain valuable qualities which very few men possess. The maintenance of a delicacy and refinement in the performance of their work, and the inculcation of a high moral tone, appear to follow

naturally on the introduction of the educated woman nurse into hospital wards, and her influence in these ways has so permeated hospital life, that it has altered its whole character, and its value can scarcely be overestimated. It is to be noted that departments in which men have exclusive control do not, as a rule, exhibit in their management the same virtues. In making these remarks we do not in any way wish to reflect upon the work of the male nurses on the *Maine*. The NURSING RECORD indeed is the only paper in this country which has publicly expressed its high appreciation of their training and qualifications, and we are satisfied that the very best that men can do they will do. But we do not think that a perfect whole can be attained without the utilization of the gifts of both men and women—"each fulfils defect in each"—and it is therefore with the strongest regret that we note the decision of the Committee of the American ship *Maine* to exclude trained women from rendering future service.

The subject is one which we should have preferred to leave alone had not so many questions and reflections upon the value of the services of the women nurses on the *Maine* appeared in the press, but, as publicity has been given to these remarks, which affect

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