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Editorial.

A POINT OF HONOUR.

The question as to whether nurses should wear an outdoor uniform is one which is much debated. So far as private nurses are concerned, we think it is seemly and professional that while on duty with a patient they should wear the uniform of their calling. There is no doubt, moreover, that the arrival of a nurse in a house so clad at once inspires confidence on the part of employers which otherwise would not be so easily attained. When not on duty with a patient, or in the case of nurses in institutions, we are inclined to think that outdoor uniform may well fall into disuse.

Three main reasons were originally urged on behalf of an outdoor uniform:—

1. The protection it afforded to the wearer.
2. That the institution to which she was attached might be identified.
3. Its convenience on account of the ease with which it is donned.

1. Most nurses will be agreed that an outdoor uniform does not now command the respect which was originally accorded to it, and, therefore, that from the point of view of the protection it affords the wearer it is no longer useful. The neat and quiet uniforms prevalent in the eighties proved so becoming to their wearers that others were not slow to appreciate the fact, with the result that "uniforms," often meretricious and flashy as their wearers, were adopted by all sorts and conditions of persons whose behaviour did not command respect.

2. The identification of the institution to which a nurse is attached, with the exception of a few leading hospitals and societies, is an almost impossible matter in these days when uniforms are legion.

3. In considering the question of convenience, it must be remembered that the large cloak was originally adopted in order that a nurse might be able to go out for a walk without spending time upon chang-

ing her costume. Two things must be taken into consideration in this connection. First the fact, which we now appreciate in these days of asepticism and cleanliness, that the dress worn in a hospital ward or patient's room should not be worn in the street, and therefore that, whether a nurse wears an outdoor uniform or not, she should change her dress before going out. The second point is that, five-and-twenty years ago, the "national uniform" of coat and skirt was unknown. Now, what is easier than to don a well-fitting costume of this kind? It is neat, lady-like, and unobtrusive, and its wearer may always feel satisfied that she is suitably dressed. There is no special reason why nurses off duty, any more than officers in the Army, or members of any other profession, should proclaim their calling to the world by their dress.

But one point we desire to emphasise, which is that when wearing a nursing uniform, whether out of doors or indoors, every nurse should consider it a point of honour so to wear it as to bring credit and not criticism upon her profession. If she is out of uniform, an unbrushed costume, untidy hair, and untrimmed gloves bring discredit on herself alone; but if she is in uniform she represents to the public the profession to which she belongs, and she should consider it an obligation to guard and cherish its honour. A slovenly or untidy soldier is a sight unknown. When will it be possible to say the same of nurses? Although all the untidy-looking persons who wear uniform are not nurses, we fear that some who hold irreproachable certificates cannot be held free from carelessness in this respect. We therefore desire to put before all nurses as strongly as possible the duty of professional pride in this connection.

Further, a nurse in uniform should be studiously quiet and restrained in her behaviour in public. Conduct which would pass unnoticed in the modern girl is at once criticised in a nurse.

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