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Editorial.

THE LACK OF BUSINESS HABITS.

The lack of business habits which permeates the nursing profession, from the top to the bottom, is a subject which is frequently forced on our attention, and is one which does not conduce to its credit. Recently, for instance, an important Medical Society addressed a courteous letter to the Matrons of 27 special hospitals in connection with a nursing matter, and of this number 8 did not even acknowledge the letter. Surely a courtesy of this kind shown by the medical profession to our own should be received in the spirit which inspired it, and be promptly acknowledged, even if it is not the routine practice of these Matrons to reply to business letters addressed to them.

When such a lack of grip is shown by those in responsible official positions, it is scarcely to be wondered at that similar complaints are heard of the rank and file. "Nurses are so unbusinesslike," "in anything at all outside their own work they seem to have no sense," are comments which often reach us. Yet nurses are constantly called upon to perform most responsible duties, and if they fail in the commonplace relations of life they do not impress the public with their capacity for their own special work, although in this respect they may be eminently capable.

Further, for their own sake, it is essential that nurses should have some knowledge of business. Many seem to know nothing of the value of money. Yet private nurses, who take their own fees, must know something of the methods of banking, and also of investing. Again, if they knew more of the cost of living we should hear less of the "high prices" charged them for board and lodging. Living, as a rule, in public institutions, or at the expense of their patients, in both of which cases board, lodging, and washing are provided for them, they are apt to think the sums charged them when they incur these expenses themselves are exorbitant; yet a little practical experience

must convince them that the cost of maintenance of a house in London, even on the most modest lines, is considerable. Good service is difficult to obtain, and proportionately dear; while laundry expenses, if bed-linen, window blinds and curtains, and the many other items in domestic use are to be kept in a dainty condition, mount up to a considerable sum.

As we have already seen, the knowledge and practice of business methods is an important part of the duty of the Matron of a hospital. For this reason many nurses do not succeed when appointed to higher positions. They may be competent and conscientious as nurses, but as Sisters and Matrons, more especially in the latter position, they must be good administrators and domestic managers if they are to be successful. A large part of their duties are now administrative. They are concerned with the purchase of stores, the testing of goods delivered to ensure their being up to sample, and many other items in which a knowledge of business is involved. In this department of their work nurses receive little training, and their deficiencies are often conspicuous.

Another way in which nurses often fail to carry out their business obligations is in neglecting to notify to professional societies, and directories with which they are connected, a change of address, and even a change of name. Often when a slip is sent to them for their correction, with an addressed envelope for its return, this is put aside for weeks, or even completely forgotten. Such a lack of attention to business is regrettable from every point of view. It affords an argument which the opponents of nursing progress are not slow to use, that nurses are, as a body, so irresponsible that it would be useless to accord them self-governing powers. It gives endless trouble to those whose duty it is to keep accurate lists of the names and addresses of nurses, and, lastly, for nurses themselves it is surely undesirable that they should be almost devoid of qualities which are essential for the successful management of personal and public affairs in all ranks of life.

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