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Editorial.

SISTERS' SALARIES.

One of the most onerous and responsible posts which a nurse can be called upon to undertake is that of Sister in a hospital ward. Let us consider for a moment what are the requisite qualifications for such an office.

1. The Sister must be a thoroughly efficient nurse. She must hold a certificate of three years' training in a general hospital, and, if she seeks an appointment in a female ward it is highly desirable, if not necessary, in many of the provincial hospitals that she has also had further experience in the nursing of maternity cases, for in provincial towns where there are no maternity hospitals critical cases of this nature are not uncommonly admitted to single wards connected with the ordinary wards of a general hospital, and if they are to have the best possible care the Sister must have a competent knowledge of maternity work.

2. The Sister must be a good domestic manager and organiser, for however excellent a nurse she may be, if she has not these qualities the ward will not be well controlled.

3. She must have some worldly wisdom, for she has to please and to deal with a great variety of people—Matron, hospital authorities, doctors, nurses, servants, and visitors, the last may be benefactors of the institution, charitably disposed persons making inquiries after individual patients, or patients' relatives. The tact that is required to deal with so varied a list only those who have had to undertake this office can tell.

4. It is also the duty of the Ward Sister to teach constant relays of probationers their practical work as well as a certain amount of theory, so that she must possess the faculty not only of assimilating but imparting knowledge. Year in year out she is at her post, every day, Sunday and week day alike, finds her on duty in the ward at 8 a.m., and it is often 10 o'clock at night before she closes the door of her room after having given the night

nurse her instructions. The great responsibility which rests upon the Sister is scarcely appreciated by the public. Twenty-four or more critical cases for whose well-being in the absence of the house surgeon or physician she is responsible are a heavy responsibility for any woman. True the doctor can soon be summoned, but many emergencies have to be dealt with before he can arrive.

What, then, is the reward of the official upon whom all this devolves? The pleasure of the work, it is true, is not small, and the position an honourable one, leading perhaps to further preferment. But the salary attached to it is commonly one which a competent ladies' maid would hesitate to accept, £30 to £35 a year being a very usual amount, and £50 being an outside figure. The maid, it must be remembered, has passed through no arduous three years' training, and she has her perquisites. The Sister has none; on the contrary, she spends every penny she can spare on the ward, many a shilling of her small income going in dainty accessories for its use, and in flowers and plants to keep it bright and gay. Does anyone ever wonder where the palms and ferns come from when admiring them in the scheme of ward decoration? It may safely be assumed that the large proportion have been paid for by the Sister and nurses. Is it not time that it was realised that the worth of a good Sister is untold, and that she should, at least, be paid a salary which will enable her to make some adequate provision for the days when she can work no longer, and to take a restful holiday at the end of a year's hard work.

In former days the systematic teaching of probationers formed no part of a Sister's duty. Now that our hospital wards are schools of nursing, Sisters might reasonably receive an honorarium for the teaching duties which they undertake? The benefit would be twofold. The instruction given would be more systematic, and the Sister would receive some recognition of her work in this direction.

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