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## Editorial.

### AN UNDESIRABLE CUSTOM.

It is well known that in certain hospitals and institutions the systematic organisation of testimonials to the Matron or Superintendent is a considerable tax upon the slender incomes of many nurses. The feeling is prevalent that such a system is undesirable, and we have been asked by an influential matron to discuss the question. We have no hesitation in saying that the practice is a most objectionable one, and we know that an overwhelming majority of Matrons possessed of a sense of honour which may be considered over nice by their less fastidious colleagues, think as we do. We do not refer to small spontaneous gifts, such as flowers, from individual nurses, or to a united gift on the resignation of a Matron, provided the desire for its presentation originates with the nurses themselves, but to the annual Christmas and birthday gifts, the suggestion of which coming from one near in office to the Matron is regarded more or less as compulsory, so that the majority of nurses grumble and pay tribute, while the minority who have the courage to decline to subscribe are made to feel that their conduct is disloyal.

There is no occasion to mention the institutions in which this practice is in vogue, as they are well known in the nursing world, as are also others in which the Matron makes it plainly understood that annual presentations are unacceptable to her.

Our objections to them are on the following grounds:—

Many probationers have no income while training beyond the small salary paid to

them, which is only just sufficient for their own needs even if, as frequently happens, they have no other calls upon it.

Any gift to be of value must be the free-will offering of the donor.

A very undesirable element is introduced by the organisation of testimonials by a highly placed official. In such a case they are liable to be utilised as a means for that official to curry favour with her superior officer; the handsomer the gift, the greater the credit reflecting upon the organiser, consequently the orange, in the form of the nursing staff, is squeezed somewhat dry in order to present to Cæsar not only an offering worthy of acceptance, but testifying to the devotion of the subordinate officer. Is it surprising if the nurses who make a stand against the impost are few, knowing as they do that they will be regarded as delinquents, and that their action may be prejudicial to their promotion when desirable posts fall vacant.

We have spoken plainly on this subject because we are aware that many nurses feel the burden of this annual taxation. It is natural that they should feel a delicacy in taking a strong line in the matter, and we therefore voice what we know to be the feeling of the large majority of Matrons, Sisters, and nurses, namely, that from every point of view the discouragement of systematic testimonials is desirable. Also that they are in no sense representative of the popularity of the Matron to whom they are presented, but rather a reflection upon her nicety of feeling.

If loyalty is to be gauged by £ s. d. then nepotism will naturally result. As the offending officials are few we are glad to emphasise the honourable and disinterested relations which exist between the majority of Matrons and their nursing staffs.

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