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Editorial.

THE PROFESSIONAL NURSE.

The Professional Nurse is much in evidence before the public just now. Whether it is in relation to her claim for Registration, or her own alleged shortcomings, her affairs are discussed at considerable length in the general press. Even her use of the term professional is sometimes a matter of offence.

The word "professional," as applied to a person, is defined as "one who makes his living by an art which to others is a pastime." This is precisely the position of the professional nurse. She may, and she should, have all the artist's love of her craft, she may put work into it which no money can buy; whether paid much or little, she should never be content to give less than her best. But, further, she regards her work seriously, not to be taken up and laid down at will, but as her business in life for which she qualifies herself by a thorough training, for, that training completed, she must be efficient. The public who employ professional services have a right to efficiency in the person employed; it is the duty of the nurse to be competent. Ignorance on her part is inexcusable, she must possess the skill bred of knowledge, of practical experience, of hard application, otherwise her claim to a professional standing is fraudulent. Herein lies the difference between the amateur and the professional. No one wishes to deny that the amateur may have much useful knowledge, that she may be able on occasions to render valuable service. But her knowledge is of necessity partial and incomplete, she has never applied herself to a thorough mastery of

the subject but relies on her natural taste and miscellaneous experience. Consider, for instance, the case of the amateur in such a calling as that of cook. She may be able to make bread, butter, dainty cakes, and delicious sweets. Her admiring friends regard her as a "born cook." In certain directions her talents are useful. But ask her to serve an ordinary dinner, and her ignorance is at once apparent. She is not to blame, she is an amateur, with an amateur's limitations. Did she claim to be a professional her ignorance would be culpable. She would then put her inefficiency on the market as skilled labour, at the price which such labour commands. The same argument applies with greatly increased force in the case of nursing. So long as she is known for what she is the amateur nurse may justify her position. The medical attendant, realising her limitations, utilises her services in certain directions, but does not put upon her the responsibilities involved in the nursing care of a case. It is quite otherwise when such a woman holds herself out as a trained nurse. It is then assumed that she is competent to perform certain duties, to make certain observations in which failure means disaster, possibly loss of life itself, to the patient. The risk, in fact, is so great that there should be an unmistakable line of demarcation between the two.

It is this point which is involved in the demand for State Registration. The nurse who has conscientiously trained for, and who realises the gravity of, her responsibilities claims the status of a professional worker. It is due to her, and it is assuredly due to the public that she should be accorded it,

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