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EDITORIAL.

PRIVATE NURSES.—I.

ONE of our readers has received, and forwarded to us, some extraordinary documents, requesting us to comment on them in this column for the benefit of others who may have been favoured with similar communications. One is headed, "Nurses' Mutual Society for supplying Private Nurses." No other address, save the somewhat wide one of "London," appears on these circulars, to which we give publicity on another page. It will be observed that they are not dated, and do not contain a single name. In fact, as our correspondent remarks, "What on earth does this mean? Is it a joke or a hoax?"

The question is by no means easy to answer, and indeed could clearly not be satisfactorily settled upon the evidence of these papers alone. But it so happens that for some weeks we have been quietly watching the incubation of this scheme, and so we are in a position to explain the mystery, and counsel Nurses upon the matter. It has arisen from the well-known fact that at many Private Nursing Institutions the Nurses receive but a small share of the amount which is paid by

the public for their services, the remainder going in payment of the expenses of management, and as profits to the manager. Now, at first sight, it seems most unjust that a woman who by her labour can earn, say, £80 a year, should only receive from £25 to £30; and, indeed, thus broadly stated the arrangement seems altogether indefensible.

But all who know anything of Nursing, or of Nurses, are well aware that the matter cannot be so simply summarised, and that it really bristles with difficulties. To begin with, it must be remembered that the sick public require Private Nurses, and that Nurses who have left their Hospitals are seeking for patients to attend. The connecting link between the demand and the supply is effected either by an Institution or by a Medical man. In the latter case the circle is very limited, but so far as it goes the arrangement is probably highly satisfactory to all concerned. The patient obtains assistance generally at a less cost than would be charged by an Institution, and a Nurse whose character and efficiency is personally vouched for by a trusted friend—the Medical attendant. The Doctor gains an assistant whose trustworthiness, conduct and knowledge are known to him by actual experience, and who he is certain will not fail him, because her employment rests to a large extent on his continued confidence in her. The Nurse, while her services perhaps obtain a smaller weekly sum than her Institutional sister's are appraised at, has the double satisfaction of receiving the entire amount herself, and of working with a Doctor whose ways she knows, and of whose support and confidence she is assured. But there are only comparatively very few Doctors who now carry out this arrangement, because the sudden exigencies of illness often necessitate at one time the employment of stranger Nurses for their patients, and at another they may not have sufficient work to give to their regular employées. Then again an increasing number of Medical men now decline either to

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