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EDITORIAL.

SPECIALISM IN NURSING.—II.

IN the consideration which we gave last week to this subject, we showed that the principle of specialism had been recognised in the medical profession for more than three hundred years, seeing that throughout these centuries there had been a marked distinction made between Physicians and Surgeons; and furthermore that the exigencies of modern life tended to the constantly increasing subdivision of existing fields of work. But just as it is incumbent upon all men, before they can gain a legal qualification as medical practitioners, to pass through a complete curriculum of education and a searching examination in Medicine, Surgery and Obstetrics, so we contended that it was essential that every woman desiring to work as a Nurse should first obtain an all-round knowledge of her calling. We have this week been informed by several of our readers that this is a standard impossible of attainment in some cases, and quite unnecessary in others; and they give us what they imagine to be conclusive arguments. As we pro-

ceed with this important matter we will deal with these objections, and show that they do not touch the great principle in question.

But now let us take in turn the various questions propounded by Mr. WARRINGTON HAWARD in the paper, which by special request, and at the last moment, we published in our last issue. Is it desirable that there should be Nurses specially devoted to Medical, Surgical, and Obstetric cases? Taking the latter class first, we would most emphatically state our opinion that Monthly Nurses should be specialists. The work, both as regards the mother and the child, is so entirely distinct from that required in any other class of cases, that it not only requires special knowledge, but even special aptitude, to perform it efficiently. We feel inclined to emphasize the latter point, because we have heard it authoritatively asserted on the one hand that any woman can act as a Monthly Nurse; and on the other, that it only requires a first-class general training to produce such a worker. There is a modicum of truth in both statements, but neither are entirely true.

Many women have a natural instinct for nursing, and either by accident or acquired knowledge are able to manage young infants. Given this capacity, and in a simple case no more may be required from the attendant. And this explains the well-known fact that the great majority of Obstetric Nurses, even in this present year of grace, have had little or no training. It is very common, for example, for a Doctor—who in ordinary medical or surgical cases is most particular as to the capabilities of the Nurse whom he employs—to advise some middle-aged widow, left destitute with a family to support, to go to a Lying-in Hospital for a month or six weeks, and then undertake to supply her with work. In such cases the public rarely suffers, because the Doctor

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