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Editorial.

THE ORGANISATION OF NURSING HOMES.

It has been suggested from time to time that Private Pay Hospitals—better known as Nursing Homes—should be inspected and registered by Act of Parliament; and whilst we have been “muddling through” as usual in this country, the Legislature of New South Wales has acted, and passed a very useful Bill for the purpose, greatly to the satisfaction of the trained nurses who superintend the care of the sick in such institutions, in that progressive Colony.

In view of the interest which is now being slowly aroused on this question, it will be well for us briefly to explain why the public is dissatisfied with the present system of conducting many nursing homes, and to suggest how they could, be improved and become more popular.

The chief defects of Nursing Homes of which the public complain are:—1. That not being built for hospital purposes, the structure of a private house is insanitary and inconvenient. 2. That the proprietress seldom possesses sufficient capital to carry on the home in the highest degree of efficiency; that this lack of capital cripples the domestic management. 3. That the house is not sufficiently large to lodge an efficient and permanent nursing staff, who can be well organised and perform their duties as in a hospital from day to day, and, in consequence, strange nurses are either engaged from outside or are utilised on a private staff for gain. 4. That many trained nurses are ignorant of business, and in consequence the charges are often excessive for the benefits received.

The remedies proposed are that all institutions which admit persons for medical treatment shall be built specially for the

purpose, on the most expert sanitary lines. That the person or company financing such homes shall possess ample capital, so that the nursing shall be carried out by a permanent staff of thoroughly efficient certificated nurses, responsible to the proprietor, herself a trained nurse, or superintendent of nursing; and that the whole management shall be based on well-defined business methods.

The object of the registration of nursing homes is to provide for systematic inspection of such homes, and the licensing of only such institutions as are in every way suitable for the efficient care of the sick. In view of the conditions to which we have referred it is obvious that it would be of the greatest protection to the public, that such registration and inspection of nursing homes should be carried out. To do this would only require the special powers, which are already conferred by Parliament upon local authorities such as the County Councils for the inspection of lodging houses, being extended to nursing homes, with the provision that nurse, as well as sanitary and medical inspectors, should take part in the work.

In advocating public supervision of Private Pay Hospitals we do not wish in any way to depreciate the excellent, and often self sacrificing, work performed by many well-trained and conscientious women now engaged in this branch of nursing. Rather, we believe, that their good work, now often ignored, and classed with that of an inferior order, would gain recognition and appreciation from the approval of expert and independent supervision. The well-managed homes would be hall-marked, and those badly conducted would be closed. The public and the medical profession would regain confidence, which of late years has been seriously shaken.

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