

THE
BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,141

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1910.

XLIV.

Editorial.

DECOY DUCKS.

A mischievous suggestion made by Sir Henry Burdett on his journalistic tour, as a self-appointed critic of provincial hospitals, has been the establishment of private nursing institutions in connection with all hospitals. Mischievous because the organisation of such institutions is rarely undertaken by hospital committees except with the object of utilising the services of nurses to replenish the coffers of the institution, and the only just system upon which they can be employed, if it is desired that their services shall be obtainable for their private patients by the medical staff of a hospital, is the co-operative one, or, if a definite salary is paid them, after the expenses of the year have been met the profits of the undertaking should be divided between the nurses who have earned them.

The reason alleged by Sir Henry Burdett for the maintenance of such private nursing staffs is a financial one. In his view it is necessary that the nurses should act as decoy ducks to bring money to the coffers of the institution. He believes that to maintain an efficient private nursing staff, and give the first call upon their services to subscribers and governors of the institution "should mean a large addition to the subscription list, and so the financial position of the hospital would be strengthened immensely." Indeed, he goes further, and says that "a good private staff of nurses will become essential to every voluntary hospital, for in no other way can the economic conditions be fulfilled."

If nurses are so important a financial asset to the hospitals—assuming that they are willing to be exploited for gain in this manner—one would have supposed that their welfare would have received due con-

sideration; but in advising the committee of the Swansea General and Eye Hospital that the discontinuance of their private nursing staff had been a "serious error on financial and public grounds," Sir Henry Burdett advises the Board to re-establish a private nursing staff and to set apart the existing Nurses' Home for the use of this staff alone. Of this home he says it "is very badly planned, and is indeed about the worst building of the kind we have inspected in the West of England. It is most inconvenient to work and has few features of comfort or attraction." So much for adequate accommodation for the private nursing staff!

One advantage which is sometimes expected to accrue to a hospital to which a private nursing staff is attached, is that the nurses should bring in donations to its funds from their patients. But it is no part of a nurse's duty to obtain a subsidy from her patients, in addition to the fees which are charged for her services. A patient asked by the nurse who has cared for him during a serious illness may not like to refuse a donation, though, in addition to the heavy expenses which illness always brings, he may feel that he can ill-afford to give it. Business and philanthropy are best kept apart, and it is a mistake to expect nurses to act as decoy ducks, and to replenish the coffers of the hospitals to which they are attached by this method. Both patients and nurses are placed in a false position thereby.

To turn for a moment to another side of Sir Henry Burdett's comments on the provincial hospitals, a noticeable feature has been his fulsome and ill-judged flattery of the Matrons, which, we understand, has caused considerable annoyance in more than one instance. It is ill-judged because committees are but human, and it is not pleasant

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)