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Editorial.

**THE NECESSITY FOR ORGANISED NURSING
EDUCATION.**

The fatality at St. Thomas's Hospital, to which we called attention in this journal last week, furnishes an object-lesson which is of the utmost importance to the whole community. Briefly, the statements made at the inquest on a patient were that the nurse gave her half an ounce of morphia in mistake for half a drachm, and that the medicine-glass she used was marked in teaspoons and tablespoons. These statements were admitted to be accurate; indeed, the nurse may be commended for the conscientious and truthful manner in which she gave her evidence, as she explained that the nurses at St. Thomas's Hospital have no special training as to the administration or nature of fatal doses of poisons; and she added, "we have to find that out for ourselves."

Subsequently, the Secretary of the hospital, in an interview with a lay journalist, is reported to have said "that the statement was substantially correct, though not happily expressed"; and to have added, "there is no need for the nurses to understand the strength of doses of any mixture, so long as they are able to carry out the doctor's instructions." It must be remembered that the whole object of professional education is to fit persons to perform their duties in an expert and skilled manner; that the duties of a nurse responsible, as she often is, for human life, make it imperative that the principles of nursing—which includes the administration of drugs—should be systematically and carefully taught by those responsible for her training; and to argue that trained and efficient nursing can be based on mere rule of thumb, and not on accurate

knowledge, is an admission of ignorance upon the part of a responsible hospital official, which is almost incredible, if it was not a fact that in very few of our lay-managed Nursing Schools the curriculum includes instruction in the elements of materia medica.

The wider her knowledge, and the greater her experience, the more valuable is the nurse both to doctor and patient. At the present day, when many commonly used drugs are poisonous in large doses, the nurse who is not taught the nature and doses of these poisons during her training will always be liable to make some fatal mistake.

We protest, therefore, most earnestly against the assumption that nurses can be considered efficiently trained if they are not efficiently taught; and urge, for the safety of the public, that those responsible for the training of nurses, should realise that neglect in this particular almost amounts to criminal negligence on their part.

But just so long as Parliament neglects to frame and pass an efficient law for the organisation of Nursing Education and the Registration of Nurses, tested by an independent examination, just so long will the lives of sick persons be in peril—not only by poisons, but by general ignorance and lack of skill, resulting from obsolete methods of teaching. It is high time the happy-go-lucky, cheap, and insufficient method of education provided for nurses in many hospitals should be dealt with by Parliament, and that it should provide safeguards for the lives of the community. The opposition of the un-professional persons who control the voluntary charities of the Metropolis to State organisation of nursing is an economic one, and the Government must, sooner or later, deal with it as such. The lives of sick people should be a most

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