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EDITORIAL.

THE DISPLAY OF ORDINARY CONSIDERATION.

"The world's a room of sickness, where each heart
Knows its own anguish and unrest.
The truest wisdom there and noblest art
Is his who skills of comfort best."

All members of the nursing profession who read a letter from an ex-patient in the *Church Times* on the subject of the personal characteristics of nurses in a London Hospital will grieve that it is possible for such charges to be brought against their order. For the letter is written soberly and restrainedly, but it is evidently the opinion of the writer that the ordinary courtesies of life are not to be expected of hospital nurses unless they are inspired by the religious motive.

We are far from desiring to under-rate the influence of Christianity as an ennobling factor in character, but, in the name of our common humanity, we must claim that it often exhibits nobility, unselfishness, consideration, and gentleness of a high order. Even uncivilized Africans, usually regarded as barbarians, lavish the greatest kindness on children, not necessarily their own; the devotion of Indian ayahs to their charges is well known, and the nursing instinct is only the mother instinct developed in another direction. The author of the letter referred to writes:—

"As one who has recently undergone an operation in a general ward of a London Hospital, I should like to ask whether it is impossible that the earlier spirit which prevailed in hospitals should be revived: . . . In my own case, as I was being wheeled towards the lift on the way to the anæsthetic room, the nurses who accompanied me were shrieking with laughter at some foolish joke, and the whole atmosphere was one of

callous indifference towards the mental and physical sufferings of the patient. One needs to have been through an operation oneself before one can realize the tremendous difference it would make to feel at such a moment that there was at least one person who was touched with a feeling of pity.

"Similarly, in regard to the daily dressings, etc., after an operation, I do not plead for an exaggerated show of sentiment, on the part of the nurses, which would be out of place, but merely for the display of ordinary consideration and gentleness in dealing with suffering humanity; and this, I venture to think, is not what one usually finds in the general wards of a large hospital, if my own experience, and what I have heard from others, may be said to prove anything. In my own case, out of the dozen nurses who at different times attended me, two only showed what I should call ordinary consideration and kindness, and both of these I afterwards discovered, were truly religious women. Is it not a fact that without religion the ordinary nurse tends to become hardened, and so to regard each patient merely as a 'case' and nothing more?"

Once again we say no. If the woman is of the type from which nurses should be selected, it would be quite impossible for her to behave in the manner described by the correspondent, whether professedly actuated by religious motives or no. But the truth is that the women now applying for vacancies in hospitals are, as a whole, of an inferior type to those of a quarter of a century ago, and this condition is likely to continue, and to become accentuated, until nurses have some professional status, the result of which in New Zealand, as Dr. Chapple has shown, has been to attract a better class of women to the profession and to raise the whole standard and tone of nurses in the Dominion.

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