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EDITORIAL.

THE NURSE GENERAL.

One of the characteristics of the present century is the desire for travel, a desire which is shared to the full by nurses, who find opportunity for it in connection with societies formed to send trained nurses abroad, and in response to the needs of our Colonies and other countries where the demand is still in excess of the supply, and where, therefore, it may be supposed that the opportunities are greater than at home, where hundreds of applications are made when a desirable post is advertised.

But nurses who contemplate foreign or colonial service must remember that they live at present in the most comfortable country in the world, where the best service is obtainable, and that life in a well-appointed Nurses' Home, with its comfort, clockwork regularity, and sufficiency of service is not good preparation for roughing it in the Colonies, where service is not only expensive, but often unattainable, and where, therefore, the nurse has not only to nurse the patient, but also often to act as general servant to the household.

We have had the opportunity of verifying this from first-hand information obtained from Colonial nurses visiting this country, and the May issue of *Una*, the journal of the Royal Victorian Trained Nurses' Association, tells the same story. Under the heading of "The Nurse General," a correspondent writes that nurses at all times lead the strenuous life, but lately it is more than that, and that a new word will have to be coined to fitly describe it. The usual thing now when a nurse arrives at her destination is to find that in addition to being a nurse, she must also be cook and housemaid. Some people quite expect the nurse to do

the work of the house, others apologize, and plead that it is next to impossible to get help.

Nursing and cooking, it is pointed out, are a bad combination, because both need time and care. You can't rush a patient through, and you can't rush cooking. Trying to combine the two, and hurrying from one thing to another, you do nothing properly. It is quite as much a sin to waste good food with hurried cooking as it is to destroy the peace and order of the sick room. The writer considers the cheerful and placid demeanour of the nurse, when trying to do the work of two women, answering the door, seeing to the callers, impossible to maintain. Being only human, and human nature being what it is, she cannot help getting worried, and perhaps irritable under the strain of it all. Her nerves are worn to breaking point. The "Nurse General" is the limit of human endurance. Five guineas a week would not pay for the wear and tear of her in Victoria much less two as at present.

If nurses who are colonial born and bred find the stress of the conditions of private nursing work in the Colony too great a strain, it is certain that those accustomed to the more luxurious conditions of life at home, will find them much more trying. If a nurse is faced with the conditions described, she will, of course, feel bound to do her utmost for the patient, but it is one thing to grapple with such conditions when they present themselves, and another to deliberately emigrate to countries where they are the rule rather than the exception.

The advice of an Australian matron who has recently visited some of our London hospitals is, "I do not advise nurses to come out to our Colonies; I do not think the conditions under which they train suit them for it"; and we endorse her judgment.

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