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EDITORIAL.

THE PRIVACY OF THE WORKER.

It has always been the boast of the Englishman, and, we hasten to add, of the Englishwoman also, that their house is their castle, and so far the privacy and sanctity of the home have been respected. But this much-prized privacy has been rudely wrested from those who come under the provisions of the National Insurance Act, and women workers, especially nurses, are finding, to their cost, that the result of legislating for women workers, without taking them into consultation, is the enforcement of legislation in a very objectionable form.

In the first place, many nurses objected to the questions which they were required to answer on a proposal form of a Nurses' Insurance Society, as both unnecessary and offensive. It is quite useless to argue that such information is confidential. This is impossible when such forms are handled by various clerks, and permanently kept for reference.

This objection applies with even more force when declaring-on forms for sickness benefit are sent in, in which case applications for pay during disabilities, of a most delicate nature, may have to be made. To have these applications passing through the hands of, and scrutinized by, young men clerks, is objectionable in the extreme, and, the fact that this is done, is the strongest possible argument for an Insurance Society officered by women, as is the case with the Trained Women Nurses Friendly Society at 431, Oxford Street, London, W.

Nurses in the discharge of their duty may contract many illnesses concerning which formerly their medical attendants only were in their confidence, and it is a real

hardship that these intimate matters should now be open to the scrutiny of young laymen in insurance offices, and that nurses who desire to obtain the benefits for which they have paid should have no option but to furnish the information demanded. They are bound to endure the publicity thrust upon them by ill-considered legislation, and it is conceivable that much unnecessary pain may be occasioned thereby.

One of the strongest characteristics of the gentlewoman is the reticence which she maintains on personal matters, and when these are concerned with illness it is increased ten-fold. In the past it is unquestionable that many women have suffered pain and even death itself rather than consult even their medical attendant concerning their illness, and for this reason the admission of women to the medical profession has been an untold boon to thousands. No doubt this reticence has at times been carried too far, but it is evidence of the strong feeling which exists among women, and for this reason some means should be found to protect the insured sick from the publicity given to the affairs of themselves and their antecedents in insurance offices.

It may be well that an attempt should be made to insure the workers of this country against sickness, but it is equally important that the necessary organization should be conducted with delicacy and restraint, and no class of the community realize this more than trained nurses, who maintain an honourable silence on the private affairs of their patients, which necessarily come within their knowledge. The fair flowers of modesty, reticence, and restraint are easily bruised, and when handled carelessly and unsympathetically, and even in a utilitarian age a prosaic nation can ill afford to ignore and affront the most honourable and sacred feelings of its womanhood.

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