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EDITORIAL.

DISCIPLINE.

Discipline is the essence of training.

—FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

It is essential to the good management of any large institution that each department should be under the control of its own head, responsible to the central controlling authority for its efficiency.

It is one of the first principles in connection with such responsibility that authority should go hand in hand with it, for, as it is impossible to make bricks without straw, so it is impossible that the head of a department should maintain its work and discipline at an efficient standard without possessing the power to exact it.

This principle holds good in connection with the nursing department of a hospital, which should always be under the control of an experienced nurse as Matron. Here two further principles are involved, namely, that the work of members of any profession should be supervised by one of their own number, and that the work of women should invariably be supervised by women, for where it is controlled by men lack of discipline is the inevitable result, and its importance may be estimated by the stress laid upon it by our great law giver, Florence Nightingale, who insisted that "discipline is the essence of training."

In this country it is recognized theoretically that the head of any nursing school should be the Matron, although practically the attempt is often made to give her the position in name, but to divest her of real authority. On the continent of Europe the "non-Matron" system still has its advocates, and it will be remembered that Baroness Mannerheim, in a most interesting paper contributed to the Cologne Congress in the session on "The Place and Duties of

the Matron as Principal of the Nursing School," unhesitatingly condemned it, in the following words:

"It is not as if the non-Matron system were a new innovation. It is just the old order of things making for muddle and confusion, which the genius of a woman once condemned with the words: 'In disciplinary matters a woman only can understand a woman,' and 'A training school without a mother is worse than children without parents.' . . .

"It is only the Matron who can get uniformity in teaching, in work, and in purpose; and her personality, which is of the greatest importance, will permeate the whole atmosphere of the hospital, whose nurses are entrusted to her care."

It follows that the women who are placed in such responsible positions should be trained for them with the very greatest care. We emphasise this advisedly because it is just in this respect that our training fails in this country. America has its Matrons' course at Columbia University, Germany is following her example at Leipsic, but although Miss Nightingale laid down the principle that "to enable nurses to train nurses, a special training is required," no such course for Matrons, except in connection with the Military Nursing Service, has been established in this country, and the training of nurses suffers in consequence. For as we have learnt to distrust the born nurse, so the born Matron is a *rara avis*. Both must be born with a special aptitude which enables them to profit by training, and by that discipline which is its essence, but to consider as many hospital committees appear to do that any trained nurse is competent to take the position of head of a nursing school is to exhibit ignorance of the true scope of training from its educational, disciplinary, and moral aspects.

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