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EDITORIAL.

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

The greatly increased cost of living, estimated at some 60 to 70 per cent., as a result of the war, is a question which affects the nursing profession in varying degrees, and is one with which the "Supply of Nurses Committee" is directly concerned. The remuneration of nurses is, as a rule, calculated on a very modest, if not inadequate scale, and it is to be hoped that the Matrons on the Committee whose duty it is "to suggest the most economical method of utilizing the services of trained nurses for civil and military purposes" will have the courage to point out that those who risk health and life in their devoted service to the sick and wounded are entitled to just—if not generous—treatment, and that the resources of the country in trained nurses cannot adequately be estimated unless they are offered the same remuneration which they ordinarily command in the labour market, besides gratuities or pensions if temporarily or permanently disabled while on military duty.

In this connection we congratulate the Irish Nurses Association on having secured the appointment on the Committee of Miss A. M. MacDonnell, R.R.C.—the only member who represents the interests of an association of workers, the others having been appointed individually by the Secretary of State for War.

There are many nurses belonging to private nursing co-operations and institutions whose services to our sick and wounded would be most valuable, and who would be available if they were employed at the rate of £2 2s. a week which they ordinarily earn, but who cannot suddenly reduce their expenditure to one half, while the purchasing power of money is so materially decreased, for many private nurses have not only their own require-

ments to consider, but have incurred liabilities which they cannot, and would not repudiate, for the support of relatives.

The nurses who at present are feeling the economic pressure most acutely are those who receive an inclusive salary and defray their own expenses of board and lodging; thus the salaries of school nurses or district nurses at £80 or £100 per annum compare most unfavourably with those of their colleagues who "live in," receive a salary of £35 or £40 a year, and have only personal expenditure to defray. We do not contend that these salaries are adequate for highly skilled workers, but only that such nurses are not affected by the abnormal cost of meat, provisions, eggs, coal, gas and other necessaries of life, as are those who have to pay for all these things out of incomes which in ordinary times are meagre, and which, with the abnormal prices ruling at the present time, are entirely insufficient.

Take a salary of £80 a year. This works out at £1 10s. 9½d. a week. Supposing that the nurse is able to obtain rooms and attendance for 10s. 6d. a week—in the London area a matter of considerable difficulty—that leaves her £1 and a few pence over for coal, lights, board, washing, dress, shoelather—always a considerable item with a nurse—to say nothing of trams and buses, expense of annual holiday, incidental expenses and savings for old age or a rainy day. How to apportion the weekly £1 is a problem we should be sorry to have to solve.

It is certain that nurses who receive comfortable board and lodging, with washing and uniform, and a fixed salary are at a considerable advantage.

Those members of the nursing profession who work at present in public institutions will find, if they enquire into the cost of those things which go to their maintenance, that they receive a very substantial increase in kind, if not in cash.

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