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## EDITORIAL.

### THE NATION'S FUND FOR NURSES.

It may be said without contradiction that never was there a time when it so much behoved every patriotic person to conserve his income and so regulate his expenditure that he may be able to place as large a sum as possible at the service of the Empire, and may also assist the urgent and often heart-rending appeals rendered inevitable by the world-wide war. Amongst these may be mentioned appeals for comforts for our splendid fighting men, and for prisoners of war, for the help of the widow, the fatherless, the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, and for the homeless, destitute, and starving among our Allies in the countries upon which the full brunt of the war has fallen.

Yet this is the moment selected to put forward an appeal for the endowment of the College of Nursing, Ltd., and for the foundation in connection with it of a benevolent fund for individual nurses. Never, in our judgment, was an appeal more ill-judged and ill-timed than that of the British Women's Hospital Committee for that purpose.

The object of the College of Nursing, Ltd., as publicly stated by its supporters, is to organize the nursing profession. There can be no freedom for a profession organized on charity, and its disciplinary body, as the College aspires to be, has no right to seek a huge sum of money from the public, by which to control trained nurses, especially as they pay a registration fee. Economically such organization is thoroughly unsound, and such a system if adopted must deprive nurses of economic and professional independence, especially as this money is to be controlled by their employers.

Most professions have Benevolent Funds for their members, but these are organized from within. Professional men and women

generously assist cases of genuine distress amongst their number, but they observe a seemly reticence. It is most distasteful that rich and leisured women should depreciate the status of trained nurses by begging for them in the press, without their consent, especially after they have been informed of the strong resentment of the self-respecting element of the profession to the indignity thus inflicted on trained and skilled women workers.

Even were such an appeal ever tolerable to nurses the proposals of the British Women's Hospital Committee would at present be singularly ill-timed. No claim can be made out for the College of Nursing, Ltd., that its appeal is of special urgency during the war. The State should make adequate provision for those nurses whose health has been damaged in its service. For the rest, never was there more employment for nurses, never, though their pay is modest in relation to the responsibility of their employment, could they earn better salaries, while the great increase in the cost of living touches them very lightly, as board, lodging and washing form, for the most part, part of their emoluments.

Trained nurses cannot be expected to accept, tamely, the untenable position in which they find themselves by the action of the British Women's Hospital Committee, and, without doubt, after the war, this demoralizing patronage by wealthy leisured women will be seriously considered, and mutual relations put on a very different footing. The ignorance of so many hospital matrons of political economy, and their reactionary attitude towards their subordinates, is greatly to blame for the humiliating position in which the nursing profession is now being placed. But wrong cannot be done to one section of a profession without others suffering, and signs are not wanting of the insecurity of the position of the matrons themselves.

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