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EDITORIAL.

THE SHORTAGE OF NURSES FOR INFIRMARY WORK.

St. Pancras Board of Guardians is calling the attention of the Local Government Board to the serious conditions arising from the shortage of nurses for infirmary work, and not only the St. Pancras Guardians, but those of most other infirmaries, have experienced the same shortage.

Now is the time for those who desire to render service to the sick poor to prove their mettle. The vocation which is discovered only when the war drums begin to throb, and which "folds its tents like the Arabs and as silently steals away" "when the war drum throbs no longer and the battle flags are furled" is no true one. The real test of a nurse is not how she performs her work in the stress of an unusual rush, or in the excitement of a Casualty Clearing Station, though nurses have responded splendidly to the demands upon them in this direction. But only the seasoned and experienced worker, whose earnestness of purpose, quality of service, and staying power have been tested, should be assigned to positions in these outposts; the real test is the way in which a nurse responds to the demands of "the trivial round, the common task."

The acute stage of the war is now over. Military Hospitals are being closed down, nurses and V.A.D.s are being demobilised in increasing numbers. But the poor always we have with us, and from many a sick bed in poor law infirmaries (soon, we hope, to be municipal hospitals under the Ministry of Health, with the taint of pauperism for ever removed) comes the silent, pathetic appeal for service. There is no glamour about this work. Many of the patients are not interesting from the professional standpoint, or as individuals, except so

far as—to the student of human nature—every human being is interesting. Their lives have been too narrow, their circumstances too hard and too circumscribed, to permit of their cultivating the graces, and developing the intelligence found in those more happily placed.

But those whose chosen vocation in life is to bring help and healing to their fellow men and women are not out to find the attractive and interesting, but the necessitous, and where more surely will they find them than in the wards of our poor law infirmaries?

At no time are our infirmaries overstaffed, and at present their need for an increase in all grades of their nursing staffs is acute. Is it too much to hope that a proportion of the nurses returning from war work will turn their attention to this branch? V.A.D.s could find no better way of testing their vocation, or of giving proof of their earnestness of purpose, than by entering the wards of some well-organized infirmary for traiping. There work is waiting to be done; the sick and infirm are suffering for lack of the attentions which mean so much to those whose outlook is bounded by the four walls of a ward, and who suffer discomfort, and even pain, because the necessary care cannot be given them. Shall they call in vain while hands which might help them are idle?

At a recent Quarterly Court of Governors at the London Hospital it was announced that instead of appointing new members to fill vacancies on the honorary medical staff, *whole-time* officers, to be adequately paid, would be appointed. This system, if adopted by the voluntary hospitals, will revolutionise medical practice in relation to them, and the ultimate result will be, no doubt, a whole-time State Medical Service for both treatment and teaching.

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