

## OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE REASONS FOR THE SHORTAGE OF NURSES TO-DAY?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Ména M. G. Bielby, Cranford, Middlesex.

#### PRIZE PAPER.

It has been truly said that it is the last straw which breaks the camel's back: in other words, the drawbacks to any career are usually cumulative. In the case of nursing the last straw is the overwhelming preference shown during the war for the unskilled, partially trained V.A.D., and the wholly untrained commandant of social position and large means. By these the fully qualified nurse of long experience has been flouted as a "paid nurse." Naturally the educated and cultured women among nurses have deeply resented this attitude. They express their feelings on the subject to their friends, and so, in ever widening circles, the opinion spreads that nursing as a career offers no inducement to the best class of young women, particularly as there are now many other good openings.

In the case of the less educated, who are frequently not only entirely dependent upon their earnings, but have to assist in the support of relatives, the low rate of hospital pay, and comparatively short working life constitute a bar. Here again better openings are now supplied by other occupations.

The old sense of vocation regarding nursing appears to be dying out. Other times, other manners. Nursing is now a scientific profession, protected by State Registration. If hospitals are to obtain the needful supply of probationers, adequate pay, and attractive conditions generally, must be offered in the place of the hardships and limitations of the past. If the sick public desire the best skill, and generous service, they must be prepared to treat private nurses as professional women; there are still many who refuse to consider them as other than upper servants; and the obsolescent idea still rules in the higher ranks of society—probably based on the essentials laid down for presentation at Court—that the woman who earns her income otherwise than by wifedom, or by her pen or paint-brush, is socially outside the pale.

In general hospitals much progress has been made regarding the nursing staffs during the last two decades; but in too many there is still the objectionable autocratic rule by laymen and matrons. It is just the type of woman who is equal to the manifold demands of nursing who will not tolerate tyranny, either during her

training or in her subsequent nursing service, and she decides against a career which implies this.

Perhaps it is too much to expect from a country which denies social recognition to its women teachers, even if university graduates, that it should extend such recognition to the trained nurses working in it. But until this is accorded our profession the public can never receive the highest value for the fees they pay, since women of high mental ability are deterred from embarking on nursing service. Private nursing duty, especially, calls for the highest and finest quality of heart and brain that can be brought to it; too often the women who can supply this are prematurely broken down by overwork during their hospital training, insufficient nourishment, endurance of cold, unnecessarily laborious tasks for which they are unfitted, and an atmosphere of worry or petty tyranny.

There is no real reason why nurse training schools should not offer the advantages of colleges in the matter of intellectual interests, libraries, games and amusements. There should be a levelling up on these lines instead of the levelling down that too often obtains at present amongst hospital nurses.

#### HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss P. Thompson, Miss J. Gordon, Miss M. Jameson, and Sister V. H. Hedges.

#### QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What is Vincent's Angina, or "Trench Mouth," and how is it treated?

## MEDICAL MATTERS.

### CANCER IN RATS.

Professor Leipix, of the London School of Tropical Medicine, is investigating the worms which have been shown by Professor Fibiger, of Copenhagen, to be a cause of cancer in rats. While it is not believed that these particular worms are concerned with cancer in human beings, there is a possibility that there may be other worms, with similar powers, capable of producing new growths.

### THE IMPERIAL CANCER RESEARCH FUND.

An interesting report was presented at the annual meeting, on July 22nd, of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, at the Examination Hall, Queen's Square, Bloomsbury, when the Duke of Bedford presided. Sir William Church, in moving the adoption of the Report, said that, "before we could plan a rational method of treatment it would be necessary to know more of the vital processes in cancer cells and the nature of the very delicate differences between them and the normal.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)