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EDITORIAL.

EAST AND WEST.

The correspondence which has been taking place in this Journal on the subject of "Indian Women and Nursing" is of considerable interest, because it is certain that if effective provision is to be made for the nursing of the sick in our great Overseas Dominions, it must be by an indigenous, not an exotic, Nursing Service. The provision of the latter to an adequate extent is far too costly, and, further, it is unsuited to the needs of the great native population outside the hospitals. The aim of those who have the welfare of these countries at heart must therefore be to develop, and utilise to their fullest extent, the good qualities to be found in native women; to turn the attention of these women to the possibilities offered by nursing as a means of livelihood, and to build up the nursing profession on a sound and solid foundation, on lines suited to the country, be it India, Ceylon, Africa, or elsewhere. In all these countries the training of native nurses is in its infancy, although hopeful progress has been made, foreshadowing future developments.

All pioneer work of this kind is difficult, demanding exceptional qualities on the part of those who undertake it—first, of course, sound knowledge, and then tact, patience, sympathy and kindness. The most desirable material is slow to present itself; the best must be made of that which is available. Certain qualities in the Oriental probationer are characteristic of good nursing—gentleness, quietness, deftness, kindness, lovability; these are good qualities with which to work. On the other hand, she is apt to be very pliable; to take the line of least resistance (a characteristic not unknown in Western countries); to say the thing which

she thinks will be pleasing to her superiors, irrespective of the merits of the case. Therefore her moral backbone needs stiffening, reliability and thoroughness must be inculcated, and a frequent tendency to inertia combated.

It is by such methods, and not by indiscriminate praise, probationers in Indian and other Eastern hospitals will best be fitted for their high and responsible work. "Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little," the moulding process goes on, and those who are carrying it out have no easy task. There is the difficulty of language, the difficulty of climate, the essential difference of outlook in East and West. They will succeed, just as British officers succeed, by leading, not driving their subordinates, and they will find that strictness, even sternness, will not be resented, provided decisions are just.

It is true that both Indian and African women are quicker to respond to the appeal of affection to a person than to that of loyalty to an abstract principle. But is not that true of all undeveloped peoples, including the children of our own race? Wise teachers utilise that quality in the early stages of education, and lead on, through and from it, to a higher and more self-reliant level.

But the Western woman must bring to her task, if she is to succeed, large sympathies and a wide outlook. Everything is not necessarily best because it is a Western custom, and a newcomer in the Orient should divest herself of any insular cocksureness, and study the problems which present themselves to her with an unprejudiced and open mind. There is much that she can teach the East. It is conceivable, also, that there are things which the East can teach the West. After all, it was in the East that British people learnt the habit of taking baths. Who shall say it is not a good one?

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