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EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, REGISTERED NURSE.

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EDITORIAL.

THE DECLINE IN NURSING

The Editor of *The Lancet*, in his Editorial of October 26th, under the title of "A Joint Enterprise," candidly emphasised the fact that "Medicine and Nursing are one art; its aim, the care of the patient." He states openly, and with certain regret, that the old spirit of comradeship and co-operation which existed between Doctors and Nurses in the days when professional nursing was in its infancy, is now fast disappearing, and we are more than inclined to agree with him.

Generously, he takes a large share of the responsibility for this break in harmonious relationship, and lays it on the broad shoulders of the doctors, and in this, we would not dare to oppose him. However, this break in the relationship is probably not the chief factor in the lack of recruits to our profession, we think the causes of the shortage of nurses and the decline of the Profession of Nursing are far more serious.

The root cause is that insufficient girls are being born. Whilst the practice of birth control and the limitation of families remain fashionable, obviously the women's professions will lack recruits, and as medical science advances, and more hospital beds are required, the shortage will become more pronounced.

Then there is the education of children in schools and in the cinemas—for it must not be overlooked that most children of to-day are frequent cinema-goers, and consequently their "education" is much more rapid than was ours. Their ambitions will be towards more exciting and flamboyant careers, and anything so apparently dull as Nursing which is derided in the Press and by public opinion, will be definitely shunned. Again the "psychological" treatment of young delinquents does not make for disciplined adults. By sparing the rod, we have spoilt the child, and we are now suffering for our kid-glove methods in our treatment of naughty children.

In our extreme anxiety to staff our hospitals and care for our patients, we have not been able to select our candidates carefully, and many girls accepted for training are not of the right type. Nevertheless, we have greeted them with open arms, given them increased salaries and good conditions and met many exaggerated demands in order to attract them to our ranks. The result in many cases has been an inflated sense of the Students' own importance and value, and many do not trouble to profit by the advantages offered and they have left nursing for an easier and less disciplined mode of life. The expense in money, expended energy, and the continual giving of one's best to unappreciative juniors fills the Registered Nurses almost with despair: so that dejection and despondency blunt the keen edge

of their spirit of service, and skilled nurses are tempted to look elsewhere for a career.

To go even further, the young student nurse of to-day is living in an atmosphere of "Trade Unionism," and she hears much talk of her "rights," her hours of work, her pay, her holidays and her off-duty time. Many girls may have come from homes where luxury does not abound, yet in hospital—nothing but the most luxurious conditions are good enough. The finest tools must be provided for their use, and the very latest in labour-saving devices must be available, their books and their exam. fees must be paid for out of public funds, otherwise they consider themselves to be shabbily treated. Is it any wonder that they cannot "knock in nails or put screws in the ceiling or be as thrifty with their strength as an old sailor"? It is painfully apparent that we are destroying the Practical Nurse, and replacing her by the theory-stuffed and spoon-fed employee, whose hands are clumsy and whose initiative is stifled and dissipated. For the best type of girl, only the best conditions are good enough, and our aim must be to create good conditions.

Thus it is that the doctors, appreciating the decline in bedside nursing, have allowed inertia to creep in and have definitely lost interest in the training of nurses, and have not been so anxious to accept nurses as colleagues. If they are really concerned about the ultimate fate of their patients, and they are really keen to see nursing restored to its old efficiency they can do much to help.

We agree that experimental nursing schools ought to be set up. In fact the authorities in Sheffield and Plymouth have already done so, and if these prosper, no doubt other cities and towns will do likewise.

Doctors can also help recruitment by backing legitimate nursing authority in hospitals, and helping in the maintenance of discipline and order. They thus demonstrate their loyalty to the profession, and young nurses, seeing the friendship and loyalty existing between doctors and nurses, will unconsciously be attracted and stimulated and they will want to join the magic fellowship themselves. It is good to allow the students to help in administrative affairs by running their own Consultative Committees, and many profit by advice and experience, but it is bad to allow young students to use their committee office to blackmail and threaten their employers, and Medical Officers should be careful not to allow this to happen. Law and order must prevail. Young people are attracted to goodness and justice generally, particularly if they have experienced the chaos and misery which follows in the wake of indiscipline and injustice.

Speaking generally, Registered Nurses have, in the past, greatly valued the friendship, advice and help which has been freely bestowed on them by outstanding

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