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Editorial.

SKILLED NURSING A "NATIONAL ASSET."

No more important suggestion has been made in recent years than that of Sir Norman Lockyer, in his presidential address to the British Association, in regard to the endowment of education. For the wealth and prosperity of the nation is not to be estimated by its territorial possessions, its diamond mines, or its goldfields, but lies in the brains of its people, and this is a mine which will well repay for exploitation. Indeed, in this country it has hitherto been almost necessary to present the credentials of social position and wealth in order to be permitted to use the brains which are not the exclusive possession of the leisured classes. Those who realise this will appreciate the force of the statement of the President of the British Association that "the present history of the world is being so largely moulded by the influence of brain-power, which in these modern days has to do with natural as well as human forces and laws, that statesmen and politicians will have in the future to pay more regard to education and science as Empire-builders and Empire-guardians than they have paid in the past. . . . What is wanted is a complete organisation of the resources of the nation, so as to enable it best to face all the new problems which the progress of science combined with the ebb and flow of population and other factors in international competition are ever bringing before us."

In this connection, we must emphasise, as for years we have been emphasising, the need of the organisation of nursing education, and of its endowment in order that it may be made as perfect as possible. Education, if efficient, is a costly matter, and it is not to be expected, it is not even desirable, that hospitals supported mainly by the contributions of persons desirous of providing for the care of the sick poor, and thus only indirectly interested in nursing education, should provide, and support, costly edu-

cational schemes. Yet the trained nurses of the country have been aptly described as a "national asset," and this truth is obtaining increased recognition. It follows that if the work of nurses is a national asset it is to the interest of the nation that it should be perfected by the best system of education which it is possible to devise, and the fact that such good work has been done under existing conditions is an earnest of what may be hoped for when system and order are introduced into the present chaotic conditions. If the brain-power of those women who for many years have studied the whole question were allowed full play, and utilised for the national benefit, we should have first and foremost the definition of a minimum and comprehensive system of education, so that the term "trained nurse" would have a definite meaning, followed by the State Registration of those who had attained to the minimum standard. We should have preliminary training-schools, and probationers would then enter the hospitals for their practical work with a scientific basis of knowledge upon which to found their clinical experience, and we should have our post-graduate colleges by means of which the graduate nurse would keep abreast of modern development. But all this means money, and so far the money is not forthcoming. We believe, for instance, that the Council of Bedford College, an institution well known for its work in connection with women's educational advancement, is making inquiries as to the possibility of arranging an educational course to meet the special requirements of nurses, but such a course will need financial support, and the question is, will such support be accorded? One thing is certain: if private effort in this country in the matter of nursing education is not supplemented by State aid, we must expect to take a secondary position. Already the United States, which readily own their debt to Great Britain in respect to the introduction of modern nursing ideals, are forging ahead of us

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