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Editorial.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTER.

One of the points of which we hear a great deal in connection with the registration of nurses, and with which we are entirely in agreement, is the necessity for the maintenance of a high standard of character in the ranks of the nursing profession.

Character is defined as "the qualities which distinguish an individual," and, as these qualities are estimable or the reverse, we describe a person as of high, indifferent, or bad character.

As regards nurses, we desire that their character should be of the highest, that they should be trustworthy, self-reliant, truthful, and upright. How can such qualities be developed? Few will be prepared to assert that these are characteristics which are found, except in the exception which proves the rule, in the slave. He is notoriously untrustworthy, dependent, untruthful, and servile. And why? Because his nature is on a lower level than the rest of humanity? By no means. His character is just as capable of development as that of any other human being, but he needs for its development just those things which are denied him—responsibility, the right to judge for himself, the trust and confidence of others. Being unjustly deprived of these, his unused gifts atrophy, and his character inevitably deteriorates.

To attain a high level of character, either in an individual or a profession, a just degree of self-government is essential, therefore, those who are denying this elemental right to nurses are not only denying them that to which their work in the past has entitled them, they are also

wronging the public who will be the sufferers if an inferior type of nurse is foisted upon them.

It must be remembered that the control of nurses by other methods than by self-government has been tried and failed. Fifty years ago they had no voice in their own affairs. They were absolutely ruled by others, and the consequence was that the character of the nurses in our hospitals was at its lowest ebb, nursing was not considered an occupation fit for educated women, and a refined, sober, and trustworthy nurse was a person most difficult to obtain. It was not until noble-hearted women had entered our training schools first as pupils and then had assumed their control that they became places to which careful parents and guardians could consent to send their daughters or wards. Both medical and lay control had proved quite futile in dealing with the personal control and discipline of nurses.

So it will inevitably be in connection with the organisation of the profession at large. If it is to rise to the highest development of which it is capable that development must come from within, not from without. It must be self-governing.

For this reason nurses are demanding the right to adequate representation on the Governing Body created under any Registration Act, and it is on this point that the opposition is now being concentrated.

The Royal British Nurses' Association, having in the past failed to stifle the healthy aspirations of the professional nurses, has now drafted an unjust Bill to *control* them. But if we know anything of the British intolerance of slavery, we know that Mrs. Thorne and Berkeley have set themselves an impossible task. The R.B.N.A. is a house divided against itself on the Regis-

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