

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 781.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21, 1903.

Vol. XXX.

## Editorial.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION.

"Every day we recognise more fully the importance of education not only to the individual life, but also to the life of the nation." So affirmed the Prince of Wales, when, with the Princess, he visited Southwark on Saturday last to open St. Saviour's and St. Olave's Grammar School for Girls. Most people will endorse the statement of the Heir-Apparent, for there is increasing recognition of the paramount importance of a sound education in equipping both boys and girls for the battle of life. It is, in fact, the best gift which parents can bestow upon their children. If this be true in the matter of general education, it is also true of that education in special branches of work in which we individualise in later life. Thus the importance of sound education in nursing affects not only the subsequent efficiency of the individual and her consequent success in her profession, but also it is of importance to the life of the nation. Indeed, nurses have been described by a recent Departmental Committee as a "national asset." The public in time of sickness is brought into most intimate relations with nurses, and with them, between the visits of the medical attendant, rests great responsibility.

During the last ten years the progress of medical science, and the consequent increase in the demands made by medicine upon the allied profession of nursing, has been great. The effort to keep up with this demand is daily becoming more severe, and on many sides there is a feeling that it is desirable for a standard of nursing education to be defined.

It is no doubt the educational aspect of the Registration question which has convinced many Superintendents of training-schools who were opposed to the granting of a Royal Charter to the Royal British Nurses' Association ten years ago of the desirability of the Registration movement. There are many

points of view from which it may be regarded, but it is primarily an educational question.

This, with further study, many Matrons have grasped, with the result that they have modified or altered their views in this relation. What is really involved in the demand for Registration? Nothing more or less than that when a woman has, by years of hard work, become skilled in the care of the sick, there should be some means by which she should be distinguishable from the untrained and partially-trained woman. This would be an unquestionable advantage to the nurse; it would be a still greater advantage to the public. But, before a nurse can be so hall-marked, we must have first a definition by a professional body as to the minimum amount of knowledge which will qualify her to rank as "trained"; and, as an inevitable corollary, the body which guarantees to the public that she possesses this knowledge must first test it. It will, of course, examine no nurse who cannot produce evidence from the authorities of her training-school of satisfactory practical work and personal fitness for membership of the nursing profession. The effects of such a system would be to co-ordinate the excellent work of the nurse-training schools, and to emphasise their educational aspect. Their pupils would have not only the stimulus of competition with those of their own school, but with pupils of other training-schools. They would also be encouraged to good work by the knowledge that the reputation of each school concerned depended upon their personal efforts.

That examinations have their drawbacks we know; the best practical nurses are not always those who pass the most brilliant examinations; but it has nevertheless been found in other professions that the good attained by their means far outweighs the drawbacks, and it is the recognition that the same truth will hold good in our own profession that has induced many Matrons to desire the establishment of a central examination for their pupils.

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