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Editorial.

THE FORMATION OF PUBLIC OPINION

It is fifteen years this week since the NURSING RECORD, now incorporated in the BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, began its work as an educative force, during ten years of which time the shaping of its destiny has been in our own hands. It is well occasionally, and the present moment seems opportune, to take stock of our position, in order to estimate what advance has been made towards the attainment of the goal before us.

While in the immediate foreground we see obstacles and difficulties to be overcome—though even in this country many mountains of prejudice have been laid low, and the attitude of former antagonists to registration for trained nurses, of which this Journal has always been the avowed supporter, has changed to one of neutrality or active support—if we take a wide survey of the movement there is every ground for encouragement, whether we turn our eyes to our own Colonies or to the United States, where the *American Journal of Nursing*, the aims and policy of which are identical with our own, is doing such admirable work. Again, in Holland, the question of registration is coming to the fore, and in Egypt a system of registration is in force.

Looking back over a period of a quarter of a century in the nursing world, we are bound to say that, in spite of the glow of pride felt in the elimination of Mrs. Gamp, the education of her successor leaves much to be desired. Mrs. Gamp's faults were obvious, and on the surface. Those of the present-day nurse, while more refined, are often quite as serious. It matters not if she is smart, trim, and technically perfect, if her heart is "as the heart of Pharaoh." As flowers turn their faces to the sun and shrivel in an east wind, so the sick thrive in a sympathetic environment, and may slip through the hands of a nurse who as a machine is faultless, but who is devoid of the first essential in the making of a nurse, tender-heartedness.

We have no hesitation in saying that nursing education has not made the progress we had a right to expect of it in the past quarter of a century, and, moreover, in the past ten years the type, the tone, and the quality of many applicants for training in our nursing schools has deteriorated, and until a definite educational and ethical standard is defined for nurses, and their profession is placed on a sound basis, this condition of things will be increasingly accentuated. New avenues of work are constantly being opened up to women. The number of nurses employed is continually increasing, and the conditions of personal comfort and freedom now prevailing in most of our training-schools are an attraction to many. Therefore, not only women of breadth of view and high ideals apply for admission, but many whose educational and personal qualifications leave much to be desired.

It must always be borne in mind that, in almost every other vocation for women, evidence of education, skill, or competence is required. In nursing candidates, none of them is systematically demanded, and therefore nursing is the *dernier ressort* of the failure of the family. This condition of things must end if we are to meet the demands of modern scientific medicine and surgery.

We are all agreed that above all others the nursing profession needs a high type of woman. We can only obtain her by increasing care in guarding its portals, by demanding adequate evidence of education from candidates, and by rigorously weeding out, in the course of their training, those who do not come up to the required standard of earnestness of purpose as well as of professional skill. Then we must make the educational course in our training-schools one which will attract women of brains and ability, and after graduation we must give them the recognised position to which they are entitled in the body politic.

No less a programme than this is the aim of this Journal, and we ask the help of all our readers in our endeavour to carry it through.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)