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Editorial.

A MEASURE OF LEARNING.

One of the first questions which will confront the future governing body of the nursing profession is what standard of general education shall be enforced. Already there are signs that the trend of opinion on the part of the medical profession and of superintendents of nursing is that if pupils are to make the best use of their nursing education they must possess a substratum of general education upon which to found their work. Indeed, when we consider the responsibilities which devolve upon the modern nurse, it is certain that she cannot even understand many of the details required of her if up to the time of adult life her mind has been allowed to lie fallow.

Hence it is that all the professions, the Navy, the Army, Medicine, and the Law, require of those who enter them some evidence of general learning besides proof of competence in their own particular branch of work. So uniformly has this been enforced that membership of a profession has come to be regarded as evidence of general culture. Thus we find the word "profession" defined as "a vocation, occupation, or calling such as implies a measure of learning." Therefore, those who claim for nursing the dignity of a profession must remember that this implies a measure of learning on the part of its members. Those, on the other hand, who do not appreciate its high calling are ready to flood our ranks with the unlearned, the illiterate, the uneducated.

The first point to be remembered in professional organisation is that the members of all professions have the right to decide who they will receive or reject as colleagues. Thus the claims of candidates to recognition must be endorsed by a board of members of that profession before they are so recognised. It is the

lack of this discriminatory authority which subjects us at the present day to grave dangers. We have, on the one hand, medical practitioners increasingly alive to the fact that general cultivation is essential in a nurse, firstly as entitling her to rank as a professional worker at all, and secondly because such culture engenders the habit of accuracy of thought and expression, so necessary if the observations and reports of a nurse are to have any value to the medical practitioner. Thus, a medical man, himself a trained scientific observer, receives with some mistrust the written report of a nurse, of the patient's condition during his absence, when that report is ill-spelt and illiterate. On the other hand, there is a hydra-headed evil springing up in our midst, and the longer we defer claiming our right to the decision as to who shall enter our ranks the more difficult will it be to grapple with when that time arrives.

We refer to the flooding of the country, by means of County Nursing Associations, with women possessing a smattering of nursing knowledge, often gained without their having spent one day in the wards of a hospital, and who do not possess the most rudimentary general education. The trouble is that in these associations the standard of both nursing and general education required is decided, not by members of the profession to which these so-called nurses belong, but by self-constituted committees of philanthropic persons. It is asserted that the ordinary trained nurse does not meet the needs of the rural poor. Perhaps not; but she would if, after an adequate education in general nursing, she were to receive special instruction in this branch of work.

It is further asserted that fully-trained nurses will not take up rural nursing, and we reply, emphatically, the point at issue is an economic one. So long as they are not offered the market value of their labour, so long will they take to other branches of work. But, if County Nursing Associations offered adequate instead

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