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Editorial.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GENERAL CULTURE.

It is a sad fact, and must afford food for reflection to all thoughtful people, that one after another of the journals brought out in the interest of women "go under." We still miss the *Woman's Signal*, and now the *Churchwoman* is a thing of the past.

But it is at least matter for congratulation that the goodwill of the *Churchwoman* has been taken over by the *Guardian*, which last week issued, for the first time, an inset dealing with women's affairs, under the supervision of the Honble. Mrs. A. T. Lyttelton. In her hands we may rest assured that it will ring true on all women's questions, and we look forward with pleasure to its weekly advent. The first instalment promises well for future issues, and, notable amongst many interesting articles, is one on "Educated Women and Nursing," which is a well-written and cultured essay, remarkable for its breadth of view and its grip of the whole nursing question. So able is it that we reproduce it, in full, in another column, feeling sure that our readers will derive as much pleasure as ourselves from its perusal.

The keynote of the whole argument is a plea for general culture, that is, for more education, for trained nurses. The drawbacks arising from the general lack of such education, and from the minute cultivation of one section (the professional) of a nurse's mind, do not produce a pleasing personage, though it may produce a good machine. The consequence is much the same as if one limb of a tree becomes hypertrophied: the general result is disproportionate and unpleasing. Therefore each day forces upon us with increasing intensity the necessity of requiring evidence of general knowledge from nursing candidates before admission to our ranks; such evidence being attained by requiring them to pass an examination in general knowledge before they are admitted to our training-schools.

Such a system would act beneficially—(1) by disqualifying those who have no intellectual gifts, for these are certainly necessary in a nurse if she is to receive the greatest benefit from her training. Then (2) as many nurses after certification take up nursing in private houses, it is specially important that they should have the breadth of view, and general resourcefulness, which are engendered by a liberal education; for the private nurse has to deal with nursing, not in a hospital, where everything is arranged for its adequate performance on lines which experience has brought nearly to perfection; but in households disorganised, as a rule, by its advent, when organising powers are needed to make the disjointed wheels work smoothly once again, and where all sorts and conditions of persons have to be considered, suited, and cheered. Again (3), as the writer of the article justly points out, "were there a larger leaven of educated women in the ranks of trained nurses, the charge of narrowness so often and so justly brought against them would cease to be heard." At present "it is difficult to carry out the smallest reform, because even the best professional opinion is apt to be biased and narrow, or self-satisfied and indifferent to evils which lie just outside its own immediate sphere." "The nurse's natural leaders still suffer too much from professional narrowness."

So, before all else, we need "that discrimination, that sense of proportion, which are the best fruits of education," so that we may deal, in an unprejudiced and statesmanlike manner, with the many problems which confront us. Amongst them, the minimum standard of nursing efficiency, the nursing of special hospitals, the control of the private nurse, the organisation of the profession "to which all the best in it aspire." We hope we may not have to wait for this, as is hinted in the article under consideration, for ten years. In the interests of the sick it is a matter of urgent national importance.

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