

Educational Questions.

We have already notified that the *Churchwoman* was to be incorporated with the *Guardian*, and that the pages dealing principally with women's work and interests would be under the supervision of the Hon. Mrs. Arthur Lyttleton, the widow of the Bishop of Southampton, and whom we all know as one of the most popular Presidents of the National Union of Women Workers.

The first issue of this Supplement, which appeared on Wednesday, July 1st, is altogether admirable, and should go far to meet the great need of a weekly paper to deal with the more serious interests of women. One article of special interest to nurses, entitled "Educated Women and Nursing," should be read carefully by all those who realise that lack of education, general and professional, is at the root of nursing disorganisation.

EDUCATED WOMEN AND NURSING.

(Communicated to the "*Guardian*.")

It would seem hardly necessary in these days to plead the cause of nursing as a profession for educated women; but the emphasis lies on the adjective, and those who know that calling best and honour it most sincerely are yet keenly alive to the fact that its numbers in its ranks comparatively few who are, apart from the technicalities of their work, in any real sense educated women. Nor is it strange that this should be so; the *elan* of self-devotion which in the middle of the last century carried a band of exceptionally gifted women into our hospitals and infirmaries, where their presence, reinforced by the great discoveries of *anæsthetics* and *antiseptics*, brought light into some of the darkest places of the earth, has to a great extent spent itself or passed into other channels. Nursing has become merely one among the many honourable professions open to women. But nursing, though a skilled profession, is unfenced by any barrier of competitive examinations, and the standard of qualification, even in the case of those hospitals which impose a preliminary test, is so low that a properly-taught girl of thirteen could pass it. Moreover, during the whole period of training, the pupil-nurse is in most cases boarded and lodged, as well as taught, free of charge by the institution which trains her. Hence it is obvious that the profession is open in a peculiar degree to those who have neither the means nor the inclination to cultivate their intellectual gifts, and also to those who may have other and less worthy aims than that of earning a livelihood while they serve their generation.

The actual mixture of classes is not itself an evil; there is no community more democratic than a great training-school, and the curious ease with which all work together is a testimony to their good sense, or, perhaps, a result of the tendency of any serious practical work to obliterate artificial distinctions. We would not eliminate from the nursing profession the woman of the lower middle class; if she uses her time well she will find when her training is over many a sphere of usefulness for which she is admir-

ably suited. Many, indeed, hold the view that the best private nurses are drawn from this class, but we do most earnestly desire that the same reasons which admit the uneducated and the half-educated should not so often discourage her better endowed sister from entering on a career which would call forth all her powers, develop the best side of her character, and fill her life with interest. 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. Now, indeed, they are as a rule zealous, devoted, unselfish; but too often small-minded and full of petty jealousies, just because they are too undeveloped intellectually to keep their thoughts from running in a groove; their conversation is limited to "cases," and their reading confined to the column of gossip in the daily paper. The pity of it! for it need not be so, and one obvious remedy is the intermixture of a larger number of women whose wider interests will raise the tone of their surroundings, whose zeal and devotion will be none the less effective that they are guided, supplemented, and freshened by a better-informed mind.

Such women will not be spoilt, as the uneducated woman is too often spoilt, by the smattering of science her ill-prepared mind vainly endeavours to assimilate from half-understood lectures and hastily-crammed text-books. The woman of five-and-twenty who has been born in a cultivated home and educated at a good school will meet no serious difficulties in the scientific and theoretical part of the nurse's training; she will be neither daunted nor unduly uplifted by an elementary knowledge of anatomy and physiology, whose unfamiliar terms are alternately the terror and the pride of the illiterate young woman flattered by admiring friends into believing herself "a born nurse." The girl who has been through a college course, too, is undismayed by the restrictions necessary to the good order and government of a large community; she is also aware of the necessity of keeping herself physically fit while studying, and will refrain from playing tricks with her own health while she should be learning its laws. And to such a woman the interest of the life on which she has embarked will not be scientific alone. Every faculty of heart and brain, every physical and mental gift can find full scope and satisfaction in the care of the sick and in the study of those social problems which come before none more vividly than the hospital nurse, and in the solution of which she will bear her part. As she advances in the knowledge of the art and science of healing in which she is the doctor's right hand, that discrimination, that sense of proportion, which are the best fruits of education, will enable her to distinguish clearly between his province and hers—a distinction too often missed by the merely clever young woman puffed up by the little learning which is a dangerous thing. Nor need any be deterred by a fear of the overcrowding of the profession of which we hear so much just now. There are too many of the incompetent or half-competent, but the skilled nurse who is also a capable and a cultivated woman is in great demand. A variety of posts are open to her. She may be retained to serve in the administrative work in the hospitals, helping to train the new generation of probationers, over whom the influence for good of a really capable "sister" is incalculable; she may rise to be

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