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Editorial.

THE RAGGING OF JUNIOR NURSES.

The report which we publish in another column of the "ragging" of a junior nurse at the Tooting Bec Asylum is almost incredible reading; nevertheless, the facts are authentic, and prove how far the profession of nursing is from the attainment of a standard of conduct which should characterise the behaviour of honourable women, and especially that of members of a profession pledged before all others to kindness and compassion. So gross a case of ill-treatment of a junior nurse does not often come before the nursing world or the public, but we fear that new-comers to hospitals are not always treated with the consideration and patience which should be accorded them by their seniors. This fact, while it is to be deplored, is not altogether surprising, for neither Sisters nor staff nurses have as yet, in many instances, realised their position as teachers, and consequently resent the constant influx of "raw material" in the shape of new probationers of little use to them as assistants, and whose uselessness is frequently explained to them in the most plain-spoken terms.

To the girl who has left home for a first time, and is shy and diffident, such treatment is not only unkind but unwise, for under it her latent capacities will never be developed to their full extent. She needs kindness and encouragement to make her believe in them, and, while she may possess too much grit to give in, she performs her work with the hopeless feeling that, however much she may strive, she will not attain good results, and consequently the quality of her work suffers.

In the absence of any definite standard of nursing education, and of any uniformity of training, it is difficult for senior nurses to understand that a most important part of their duty is to teach their juniors; that the

new probationer is not placed in a ward solely to "devil" for her seniors, but to receive instruction in the art of nursing. This is her definite right in connection with her agreement to serve the institution for a certain period.

The educational aspect of nurse-training schools is comparatively little understood even now, either by hospital committees, by the rank and file of trained nurses, or even by those holding higher posts. It is probable that the only means of emphasising its importance is by the establishment of a General Council of Nursing Education and Registration, such as is proposed in the Bill drafted by the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, when the work of a Ward Sister as a teacher of nursing would not only be understood, but probably remunerated also.

From whatever aspect it is regarded, the Registration of nurses appears to be the only adequate solution of the difficulties with which the nursing world is at present confronted—such as the maintenance of a minimum standard of education, the guarantee to candidates for training that the education they receive will qualify them to attain this standard, the maintenance of efficient discipline, the protection of the public from ignorant attendants who assume the title and the duties of trained nurses, by means of a Register in which the names, addresses, and qualifications of all registered nurses are published. All these points in relation to the necessary organisation of our profession can be enforced only by a central body which has received from Parliament authority to deal with the government of nurses.

No one can deny that the profession of medicine has gained enormously in prestige, in power, in efficiency, and in knowledge since the passing of the Medical Acts. There is good reason to believe that the effect of similar legislation upon our own would be to produce like results.

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