

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
**THE NURSING RECORD**  
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 836.

SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 1904.

Vol. XXXII.

## Editorial.

### ASPIRATIONS.

The petition made by trained nurses during the last decade, with growing insistence, for the regulation by the State of their profession, a request which is now beginning to be regarded both as reasonable, and desirable of attainment, may be approached from many points of view. One which is worthy of consideration, for it is the mainspring of the steady and consistent work of those who are asking for registration, work which is now telling in after many years of discouragement and opposition, is the passionate desire of many amongst us to stand before the public as representing aspirations higher and better than those which animate the ordinary vulgar, commonplace woman. This desire has its root in one of the highest impulses of human nature: it implies the desire of a human being to rise to a higher plane, to be recognised as something more than the merely material creature whose requirements are met when her bodily comfort is assured, the desire of one who knows that material things alone can never satisfy the spirit which has once comprehended that vital things are intangible, and who strains after these as the imprisoned bird strives to soar into the purer atmosphere which surrounds it.

It is impossible for those who have never been impelled by the force which compels men and women to strive after the attainment of the apparently unattainable to comprehend its reality. They, indeed, resent its existence in others, and, not understanding the motive which constrains them, frequently call it by hard names, of which the least hard are discontent and selfishness, while women who have this instinct very strongly developed are often accused of overwhelming ambition. We do not wish to underrate ambition; the desire to stand on the summit has its root in a fine feeling—the wish to grapple with difficulties and to overcome them—but the motive which nerves a

man—or a woman—to lead a forlorn hope is not ambition. He has heard the voice which, inaudible as it may be to others, has spoken to him with clear insistence, and he knows he would fall short of what duty demands of him if he failed to respond to it, even though its commands lead him along the road to certain death.

The worker who regards his work not merely as a means of self-support, but as intrinsically noble and worthy of devotion, is jealous for its honour, and consequently resents any lowering of the high standards which are his ideals.

And in estimating the wrong done to the nursing profession as a whole by those who are opposing the demand for State Registration we do not now take so much into consideration the injury resulting both to the public and to nurses from the lack of any minimum educational standard, and from the unsatisfactory industrial position in which nurses at present are placed, as we resent the cruelty which is attempting to eliminate from our profession generally its finest qualities, and to trample on those aspirations, and fine, generous impulses, which it should be their chief care to treasure; for when unselfish devotion to the good of the community gives place to self-seeking and compliance with the dictates of expediency, the descent of nursing from the honourable position to which it has been raised within the last half-century will be within measurable distance.

History affords ample proof of the way in which, in the past, the strong coarse-fibred material creature has stamped out of existence the finer instincts in another, and by so doing has perpetrated a wrong for which no material well-being, obtained as the price of compliance, can ever compensate.

It was the spirit of devotion to the general good, the conviction of responsibility, which animated the women who founded the Royal British Nurses' Association, and who, during the first years of its existence, poured out the splendid work which gained for it so honour-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)