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Editorial.

THE NURSING DIPLOMA OF THE R.B.N.A.

The scheme of Dr. Bezly Thorne and his medical colleagues in the Royal British Nurses' Association to bestow diplomas on nurses without providing that those receiving these documents shall afford any evidence of general education or of practical training in the special branches covered by the diploma is one which could only have emanated from men who have had no experience in connection with a nurse training school.

This was strikingly shown at the meeting at which the scheme was considered when there were on the platform as its sponsors, Sir James Crichton Browne (a mental specialist), Dr. Godson and Dr. Comyns Berkeley (gynæcologists), and Dr. Bezly Thorne, none of whom have held positions in nursing schools connected with general hospitals as teachers of nurses.

In the organisation of any profession it is a fundamental principle that candidates for admission to its ranks shall give evidence of general knowledge, as a necessary basis upon which to found their special studies. This rule should therefore be followed in any attempt to create a "degree" in nursing. The reason given by Dr. Bezly Thorne for not "taking cognisance of general education" is one which is worthy of its source. "It would," he said, "constitute an interference with the great training schools if the Association demanded preliminary education when they did not." It is plain from the attitude assumed in this connection that the Hon. Officers of the Royal British Nurses' Association do not intend to attempt to raise the standard of nurse training, or to put it on an educational footing, but merely to follow in the wake of the "great training schools." What possible advantage there-

fore is there to nurses in such an examination? Some, few who have been trained in second and third rate hospitals may be prepared to pay two guineas for the R.B.N.A. diploma, hoping thereby to gain a status which they would not have in any other way—a hope which we fear is not destined to be fulfilled; but it is incredible that nurses with good certificates will pay a substantial sum for this piece of parchment. If the Association had the courage to stand out for definite principles, to declare its belief in some definite standard of general education for nurses, even if this were at first fixed only at the sixth standard of elementary schools, it might obtain some respect, but moral courage is not a quality to be looked for in its Hon. Officers. The effect of granting a diploma which covers special branches of nursing, to women who have had no practical training in these branches is one which would have an effect grievously detrimental to the welfare of the sick were the R.B.N.A. scheme ever to be seriously taken up. The inevitable result would be to mislead the public, and to encourage nurses to believe that theoretical study of such important branches of their work as gynæcology and fever nursing is all that is required of them. The time for the issue of a diploma in nursing by any voluntary body is past. What nurses now demand is legal status, and justifiable self-government. The present attempt of Dr. Bezly Thorne and his colleagues is designed to minimise this demand, and to prevent the passage of a Registration Bill which will be acceptable to thoroughly trained nurses. It is, in short, a red herring across the Registration track. Let there be no mistake on this point. It is not, however, to be expected for a moment that any well-managed training schools or any matrons who understand professional matters will associate themselves with such a dangerous scheme.

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