

THE
BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,118.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1909.

XLIII.

Editorial.

THE DAY OF GREAT OPPORTUNITIES.

A most patent fact to the onlooker is that the present day is the day of great opportunities for the trained nurse. They surround her on all sides, and their limit seems to be set only by the extent to which she recognises them, and her capacity for using them. It is, therefore, essential that nurses should develop that quality of flexibility upon the importance of which our American colleagues rightly insist, and should be ready to grasp the opportunity of the moment and to adapt their knowledge and skill not only to institutional work, and well-established departments, but to the needs of new conditions and demands as they arise.

In all branches of our profession developments have taken, and are taking, place with phenomenal rapidity, the importance of each is increasing, and, as a result, one heard constantly during the Sessions of the recent Congress the speakers claiming that the particular branch in which they were interested needed the best nurses the profession could produce. Whether it was private nursing, school nursing, nursing in the various departments of social service opening out before the Nurse as Citizen, the nursing of the insane, or the nurse in the mission field, the demand was always the same. "We want the best, this branch is so important nothing less will suffice, the best educated, most thoroughly trained, good all round women, with high ideals, and noble impulses are essential to the progress of our work"; and, as each speaker insisted, we realised the justice of her claim, so that the conclusion was irresistible, the candidates who are accepted by our nurse training schools as probationers should be most carefully selected. If they are to meet the requirements of the com-

munity at the conclusion of their training they must be women, mentally equipped to profit by instruction, of large sympathies and intelligent interest in the social problems of the day. In the hands of such women the skill in nursing which is the result of sound training, and the practice which makes perfect, can be a power for good, whose influence it is difficult to estimate, and their work will appreciably help to raise the general standard of the national health. What inducements can be held out to attract the desired type of women to adopt nursing as a profession? Frankly they are not great in this country. There is at present no definite standard of professional education the attainment of which will confer upon them honourable status and recognition, there is no guarantee even that having spent years of hard work in the service of a hospital they will at the end of the prescribed period have received the thorough training in fulfilment of the other side of the contract, which they, on their part, have honourably fulfilled.

It is, moreover, certain that when they take up such a branch of work as private nursing they will find themselves competing on equal terms, as to work and remuneration, with semi-trained and untrained women, with probationers who have been rejected from the training schools as unsuitable or unworthy to complete their training, and with those who bring discredit on the name of trained nurse, and cause an un-informed public to mistrust the genuine as well as the spurious article. If women of the required type are to be attracted to the nursing profession in sufficient numbers to meet its needs, the recognition of the State must be accorded to those who have honourably earned it by giving proof of their competence to an independent professional authority.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)