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## Editorial.

### CHARACTER.

One of the objections advanced by the opponents of State Registration of Nurses to a Nursing Act is that "you cannot register character." No professional register directly registers character, and why should nurses be expected to do that which is not required in other cases, in which character is equally important. The character of the doctor, to whom we confide our most cherished secrets; of the midwife, to whom women entrust their lives and those of their infants, is of the highest importance, for should the midwife prove unconscientious the patient may pay the penalty with life itself. But in all these cases character is indirectly registered. Thus candidates for the examination of the Central Midwives' Board are required to produce evidence of good moral character from persons personally acquainted with them, and are only permitted to enter for the Board's examination after satisfactory evidence has been furnished. Similar evidence is demanded in the Nurses' Registration Bill. The opposition, thus driven back to their second line of defence, assert "a nurse's character may be satisfactory at the time of registration, but may subsequently deteriorate." The answer again is, that for the first time the Register will set up machinery by which a nurse may be removed from the ranks of her profession for proved misconduct. But it is not to be supposed that it will be necessary frequently to put this machinery into motion.

For the nurse training schools have a great responsibility to the public. Trained nurses, by reason of their intimate relations with the community, should be the most honourable, self-reliant, well-disciplined of women, and it is the duty of those who supervise their training to see that only

pupils of this type survive the winnowing process and present themselves for examination. These are not the women who take to drink, drugs and shop-lifting as soon as they are out of leading-strings, and who need to report themselves at short intervals to their former training school, on a modified ticket-of-leave system, in order to keep straight. What is wrong with their system that the authorities of the training schools cannot trust the pupils they send out?

Which system produces the highest type of character in the education of boys and girls. The one in which the pupils are trusted, the development of their individuality encouraged, their honour taken for granted, or the one which assumes that the pupil only keeps straight when constantly under the supervision of masters and mistresses? Educational methods in this country are founded on the former assumption, and we claim that it has been justified.

At the present time nurses, in many instances, suffer from over-supervision, which inevitably produces atrophy of the highest virtues, and so their superiors receive lip service and servility, while below the surface there is too often an undercurrent of grumbling and discontent.

The professional ideal and the ethical code of the medical profession are extremely high—they have been attained by self-government. A medical man would consider it an insult, to be required to report himself annually to the school in which he received his professional training, in order to prove he had not lost his moral character. The same holds good with nurses, who, like medical practitioners, must assume the responsibility for their own profession and eliminate the tendency to serfdom, under which they have no real power to develop the individuality and moral courage which distinguish the freeman from the slave.

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