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EDITORIAL.

LOOKING FORWARD.

On Monday last the General Nursing Council for Scotland held its first meeting in Edinburgh, and on Tuesday the General Nursing Council for England and Wales met at the Ministry of Health, Whitehall, London—red letter days indeed, not only in the history of the Profession of Nursing in the United Kingdom, but also for the community, the members of which, both rich and poor, are dependent in sickness upon the services of trained nurses.

Up to the present time no standard has been defined to which trained nurses must attain. By common consent the principal training schools have enforced a three or four years' term of training, but the standards vary in each hospital and infirmary.

Now this is of the past. Parliament has assigned to the General Nursing Councils established in the three countries, the duty of enforcing standards of nursing education and maintaining discipline amongst registered nurses, and, after a period of grace, every such nurse will be required to attain the professional standard defined by these Councils. To these Councils, also, the registered nurses will look to safeguard the honour and maintain the ideals of their profession. A great honour, and a great responsibility have been placed upon those nurses who have been selected from among many thousands of their colleagues to draft the rules and define the standards of nursing education of a great profession. It will be their duty and privilege to raise high ideals, not only on the technical side, but of earnestness, devotion to the sick, self-sacrifice, and moral courage (a much rarer

virtue than personal courage, in which nurses have never been lacking). Throughout the centuries men and women of the highest personal character have brought to the service of suffering humanity a wealth of devotion which has been of extreme value, though their knowledge in many instances has not been great. Science has taught us that knowledge must be exact and precise if it is to be of the greatest value; that no pains should be counted too great to attain it.

But a nurse needs much more than exact science. She needs knowledge of human nature—the deeper the better—and should study the problems of the day in a broad, tolerant, and sympathetic spirit. She needs tenderness in her relations with the sick, a knowledge of those things which tend to the healing of the mind, and of the manner in which the mental outlook of her patients may retard, or assist, their bodily ailments.

Again, she needs to cultivate those personal qualities which will inspire confidence and restfulness. There are nurses who radiate an atmosphere of comfort and strength, from whom the sick seem to absorb vitality, and an important part of the training of probationers is the inculcation of ethical standards and the cultivation of those qualities which will make them valued members of their profession from the personal standpoint.

The General Nursing Councils can do much to foster these ideals, and also to reveal the nursing profession to the young womanhood of the nation as the highest and most honourable, if one of the most exacting professions, which they can enter.

It is by an appeal to high and generous qualities that the right type of probationers will be attracted.

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