

inferior Training School, and lead to a general and low uniformity of qualification.

I am permitted to quote upon this subject the opinion of an experienced Hospital Matron, who writes as follows, in reply to an inquiry as to her views upon the establishment of a General Register with certificate based upon examination:—"I think both these things—viz., the examination of, and the granting Certificates to, Nurses—are most necessary, but that both should be done at the School where the Nurses have been trained, or in many cases gross injustice will be done to those best fitted to become Nurses, and immense harm to the profession itself. At the present time Nursing is fashionable, and there cannot be the slightest doubt that there are large numbers of young women taking it up, not because they have a taste for it, not even because they wish to be useful in this life, not even because they desire to earn their livelihood, but simply because they have an idea that when once their probation is over they will lead a life of much greater freedom than they possibly could if they continued to reside with their friends, and in this they are right; now these are the women who will most easily pick up the scientific part of the work, and who will, in consequence of their cleverness, their better education, their power of putting their knowledge into words, most certainly come out well in all examinations, leaving far behind the less well-educated and clever ones, although the knowledge of Nursing possessed by these may be quite as great, and their aptitude and fitness for their work much greater. Therefore, the clever and unfit ones will obtain 1st class Certificates and consequently, in many instances, good posts, while the others will only obtain 2nd class Certificates and inferior posts, which will be an injustice to them and a great loss to institutions and the Nursing profession generally. The granting of the Certificates by the authorities where the Nurses have been trained is the only means I know of for preventing this evil, because they alone can know what sort of Nurses and what sort of women the candidates for examination are. It will be useless to say that the candidates must be recommended by their Matron or Superintendent, for the women I describe never give the authorities any particular cause for complaint during their probation, therefore, they would have to be recommended, but anyone can make a fairly accurate guess as to how far they will do credit to their training when once they are free from control."

Then there are important considerations arising out of the legal character of the proposed Register. One phase of these arises out of the liabilities which Hospital authorities might incur by dismissing a Registered Nurse or even a Probationer

Nurse with or without cause assigned. Another is the difficulty of removal from the Register. The first was referred to by a writer in the *Times* at an early stage of this discussion.

A Probationer Nurse is discharged on the ground of want of aptitude for the work, inefficiency, or misconduct. She is thereby, in all probability, deprived of the power of qualifying herself for admission on the Register, or becoming a member of a profession endowed with certain privileges. This is a much more serious loss than would be incurred by the deprivation of the power of gaining a private Certificate from any given Hospital, and might entail actions for wrongful dismissals or libel. Then, with regard to the discharge of a Registered Nurse, not only do the same difficulties arise, but, besides this, the mere fact of being on the Register would tend to make her independent of the Certificate of character to be obtained from the Hospital itself which employs her, and would be likely to give rise to serious difficulties in the disciplinary control of the Staff.

The second objection is that of the impossibility of removing a Nurse from the Register where the grounds for removal have arisen from moral defects which do not amount to gross and patent misconduct, and yet are such as to render the Nurse unfit for her vocation. Any removal from a public Register must rest on evidence of a public, and not of a confidential and privileged character, and it is obvious that no person would come forward to give open evidence with reference to defects of the kind referred to. It would be nobody's interest to do so, having regard to the liabilities which would be thereby incurred.

These objections apply equally to the proposal to require a periodical renewal of some sort of Certificate of character and conduct.

They do not, however, apply to Registers kept by Hospitals or Training Schools; nor necessarily, or, at least, not in the same degree, to Registers established by voluntary associations not having any legal character.

In considering this question, it must be borne in mind that the class of persons to be dealt with will never be composed mainly, or even largely, of Matrons, Superintendents, Ward Sisters, and others holding superior appointments. To these, indeed, the Register would be of no particular advantage, so far as advancement in their vocation is concerned, nor even would it to the rank and file who are engaged in Hospital Service, so long as they so continue. It is with those who are engaged in private Nursing that the Register would have mainly to deal, and these are at present, and in this country probably always will be, principally, if not entirely, recruited from the lower middle class, who, from education and social

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