

Probationer sent to it in the place of a Trained Nurse. A little reflection will, however, soon show that this is so. The Nurse should be the right hand of the Sister, not only to be implicitly depended upon in the execution of the daily work—not only to be of untold assistance in tending the patients, and instructing the Probationers—but also to be capable of filling the Sister's place, and accepting her responsibilities, during her absence. To place a semi-trained Probationer in such a post—however willing and zealous she may be—is simply to treble the already onerous work, and double the anxiety and mental strain, of the head of the Ward. For her work has to be supervised, as well as that of the Probationer, and the Ward will only be left with fear and trembling in her charge—in fact, many a conscientious Sister will, it is known, decline altogether to leave her post under such circumstances, and it is evident that the system must result inevitably in harm alike to her health of body and her happiness of mind. But beyond this, the discipline of the Wards distinctly suffers. The Probationer not only does not learn from, but probably tacitly declines to obey a merely nominal Staff Nurse—one who, perhaps, is but a few months, or even only weeks, her senior in Hospital life. It is, therefore, easy to understand how swiftly and certainly all this tends to the greater and greater deterioration of the Nursing in a Ward so officered; and how the evil, accentuated by repetition in larger or less measure in every Ward throughout the Institution, must lead to infinite harm to the patients. But the mischief spreads far beyond the Hospital walls in various ways. Not only do the Nurses, who have thus been shuffled and scuffled through their time of training, when they pass out to pursue their avocation elsewhere, take with them the laxity of discipline, and the haphazard carelessness, which is all they have been taught under such a system, and so generally perpetuate its faults in new circles; but beyond this, the crowds of Probationers, whose periods of short service have been the starting point of the whole evil, in their turn leave the Hospital, in most cases convinced, because they have helped to tend a certain number of sick people, and heard a certain quantity of lectures, that, therefore, they are thoroughly qualified to nurse the sick efficiently. Such are the best possible exemplars of the truth, that “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing,” as they have probably just learnt sufficient to prevent them from realising that they have practically learnt nothing. Some of these, we hasten to admit fully and freely, turn their abilities and the rudiments of Nursing which they have acquired, to great usefulness, by assisting to nurse sick friends or relations, or the poor in

their parishes. But we are only too well aware that many of those who have passed through the three months' work allotted to a paying Probationer, will straightway depart and begin Private Nursing, either upon their own account, or as inmates of some Institution, and will for all future time pose as Nurses trained at such and such a Hospital.

Now, when the public is awakening to the fact that there are hundreds of women preying upon the sick in the guise of Nurses, who are completely and utterly ignorant of the Art, and is beginning to make timid inquiries as to where the Nurses it employs were trained, it is becoming more essential than it has ever previously been, for such women to be able to give some evidence of Hospital employment, of however shadowy a character, or however short a time. Consequently, we are led to the belief that in future few will venture to engage at all in Private Nursing, unless they have been actually previously engaged, for however brief a period, at some well-known Hospital. And, therefore, we foresee that the competition from persons of this class to obtain paying Probationerships will tend to increase to a greater and greater extent. How extremely unfair the competition of such workers is, and will be, to well-trained Private Nurses, it needs no further arguments to prove. And how harmful such inefficient Nursing must be to the sick is surely equally evident.

In public Institutions, therefore, and in private houses alike, Nursing will be deteriorated, and the patients in both will suffer in consequence. Nurses, whether trained or not, will be injured, directly or indirectly, and most deeply.

Finally, it must be remembered that, as Nursing is increasing more and more in popularity, as more and more people come forward and offer to pay for short periods of work in Hospitals, the Committees of Hospitals, if they do not resist the temptation, will simply accentuate the mischief; the evil results we have pointed out will increase and increase in extent and diffusion. The matter, we repeat, is a most serious one for every class concerned. We ourselves can see but one course which can be pursued with any chance of safety or possibility of success. Let it be recognised, once and for all, that Nursing is not work for amateurs—that it means life or death, suffering or comfort, ease or pain, to tens and hundreds of thousands of both sexes, and of all classes, in the kingdom. Let those who desire to play at Nursing attend popular lectures, and turn the knowledge therein gained to such good account as opportunity may afford them. Let gentlewomen be admitted as paying Probationers by all means, but let it be

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