

The Royal British Nurses' Association.

FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A
HOSPITAL MATRON.



IT may be asserted, with some confidence, that in the many discussions which have hitherto taken place concerning the Royal British Nurses' Association, and while much consideration has been devoted to this matter as it affects medical men, or nurses, or the general public, comparatively little, if anything, has been said as to the manner in which the Association affects Hospital authorities. It is certainly a point to which attention may, with much advantage, be directed, and, thereby, some of the misunderstandings which have existed upon the subject may be dispelled. So far as Hospital Matrons are concerned, the mis-statement has been industriously circulated, that the Association was seeking to interfere with, and even to dictate to, the Training Schools; an assertion which is destitute of truth, and one which it is to be hoped will, in future, cease to mislead. The Association, so far from infringing upon the rights and privileges of Nurse Training Schools, really furnishes a very powerful adjunct to the disciplinary powers and professional influence which they possess. It will not be possible, within the short compass of this paper, to prove this in detail, but two salient points may be briefly discussed.

It will be conceded by all Matrons of experience, that hitherto there has been, too often, a lack of professional feeling within, as there has been an absence of discipline outside, the walls of the Training School. A Probationer entered and signed her agreement to serve for one, two, or three years of training, as the case might be. The particular Hospital in which she worked, bounded the professional world for her. Beyond it, she soon discovered that hundreds of women were earning their livelihood, and considered by medical men and the public to be "trained Nurses," who had never gone through the drudgery of learning their duties. However long, therefore,

and however hard, this Probationer might work in the Hospital wards, it was apparent to her that, so far as her after-success in the profession was concerned, she would, in the eyes of the public, take no higher place than that taken by women who, without the slightest justification, entitled themselves "trained." It is beyond all doubt, that upon a certain class of Probationers, this state of affairs had a most detrimental effect, being destructive alike of emulation to learn, and even of professional *esprit de corps*. It has, therefore, been a common experience that many Probationers, for trivial reasons, broke their engagements, and, after a short term of training in one Hospital, drifted into another, and then, perhaps, into a third, and finally, semi-educated for their work, undertook the grave responsibilities of Private Nursing.

It is quite unnecessary to emphasize the harmful results of such a system as this, both to the public, to the individual Nurse, or to the discipline of the Training School. It is difficult to measure the effect which the institution of Registration has already had, or to predict that which it will have in the future, upon the discipline of the Nursing profession. One result, however, is already apparent. It has permeated through British Hospitals at home and in the Colonies, that in the Chartered Corporation of Nurses there is a growing power which is quietly and gradually, but surely, raising the profession of Nursing from the reproach which has hitherto rested upon it, and which will, year by year, make it more difficult for the ignorant and inefficient to claim to be "thoroughly trained Nurses." The moral effect of this, in strengthening the hands of the Matrons of our Training Schools, is manifest. Those Probationers, who desire to become hereafter recognised members of the Nursing craft, find the old laxity of definition, to which allusion has been made, becoming obsolete, and that, unless they can at the end of their pupilage obtain a testimonial of conduct and efficiency from their Hospitals, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for them to become registered as trained Nurses. Current events justify the belief, that in future, therefore, there will be less migration of Nurses from Hospital to Hospital, and that Probationers will, as a rule, complete their training in one Institution. In this connection, it would not be irrelevant to express the hope

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