

Matrons in Council.

WHAT IS A TRAINED NURSE?



MADAM,—I am afraid I cannot have expressed myself with sufficient clearness on the subject of Nurses' fees in my letter last week, or "An Old Lady Pupil" has misunderstood the drift of my argument.

What I wished to point out was the *equivalent value* of the *labour* given by one class with the *money* paid by the other in return for similar advantages. Labour is a marketable commodity—in fact was the first price or original purchase-money paid for all things—and I maintain that the woman who gives her labour, pays just as surely for her training as the woman who gives her money. It is a common error to more frequently estimate the value of a thing by the quantity of *money*, rather than by the quantity of *labour* which can be had in exchange for it. This argument naturally does not apply to those hospitals which exempt their Nurses from all laborious work; the work in such cases is done by persons specially engaged for such duties, and it is only right that the Nurses should pay in money for the undoubted comforts and privileges they receive. The argument often advanced, that pupils in all other works or trades pay a premium for the knowledge they acquire, can hardly be quoted as a precedent for Nurses. In the former case the pupil is expected to become proficient in nothing but the mastery of that particular trade which he elects to follow, whereas a Nurse has to perform many other duties than those belonging exclusively to the domain of nursing. Speaking from my own experience, when I commenced my training I had to learn how to dust, scrub, polish, clean, cook, and various other domestic duties which, though to my mind inseparable from good and efficient nursing, would not generally be considered necessary now-a-days. The performance of such duties as these is surely a fair return for the privileges of training and instruction received. To conclude, in the words of one of our greatest thinkers, "The real price of everything—what everything really costs to the person who wants to acquire it—is the toil and trouble of acquiring it."—I am, yours obediently,

JOSEPHINE L. DE PLEDGE.

Registered Nurse, Matron of the Chelsea Infirmary.

MADAM,—Kindly allow me a corner in your valuable journal to assure "An old-fashioned Matron" that her experience of modern Nurses is not singular. There is, I fear, a great want of thoroughness in detail in many of them, and I attribute it, in a large measure, to errors in their training. In my opinion, all Probationers would make better Nurses if (before any theoretical instruction was given) they were well grounded in ward routine work, sick cookery, and the many, apparently trifling, duties that make all the difference between the comfort, or discomfort, of the sick. The thoughtful letters that have already appeared in your interesting column for "Matrons in Council," leads me to hope that this matter will receive attention, and, I trust, soon be remedied. In reply to question No. 1.—Should Nurses pay for their Training, and, if so, what fee—I am of opinion that the time for training should not be less than three year; and if that training is thorough and complete, the Probationer might fairly be expected to pay a fee for her maintenance during the first year—£20 or £25 per-

haps. After the plan of some public schools, there could be a few vacancies for young women who are unable to pay any fee, but who seem particularly fitted to become Nurses. During the second year, all might receive a small salary, and for the third year I would have no fixed rate of payment, but let it be regulated by their merit and usefulness in the Institution to which they belong.

HENRIETTA LAWRENCE,

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MADAM,—In answer to question No. 1—Should Nurses pay for their training, and, if so, what fee?—I should like to review shortly the situation as it exists. At present, the condition of Nurse education is in such a chaotic condition, and the training given in our Hospitals of so irregular a quality and quantity, that an answer which would apply to one Institution would certainly not be applicable to another. Capital and labour are, from an economic point of view, of equal value—the one representing the other. The difficulty is to adjust them equally. The Committees of Hospitals, who are entrusted with the expenditure of public funds, naturally desire to use these to the best advantage, and are apt to consider the enormous increase in the maintenance of the Nursing department extravagant when comparing it with what was spent five years ago. The Nurse, on the other hand, naturally desires to obtain the most efficient training, and the best conditions possible under which to work. As a Matron, I am of opinion that—in hospitals where the Nursing is conducted on modern lines—the Committees have done all for the comfort and well-being of the Nurses that is *just*, or possible, with the funds at their command. Any further increase of expenditure—consequent upon the shortening of hours of work, increase of ward-maids to perform routine cleaning, a greater variety of food, longer holidays, and increased theoretical instruction—must be borne by the Nurse herself, because the public refuses to pay for it. I strongly disapprove of the mixture of paying and non-paying Probationers. Friction is inevitable, if money is to be awarded spurious value, and be accepted in lieu of experience and efficiency, as is the case where a short term of training when highly paid for, ensures a Probationer's promotion to positions of authority over experienced non-paying Nurses. The basis of a Nurse's educational curriculum should be founded on a definite system; and that curriculum should be passed through by all pupils in the Institution; and I am inclined to think that an entrance fee should be paid, and a certain sum in return for the first year's training, after which, a small salary might be received. I do not believe we should lose greatly in the quality of Probationers by adopting a system of payment, to judge from the material which entered our Hospitals, from fifteen to ten years ago, as "paying Pros," and from whose ranks our most efficient Matrons and Sisters have sprung. I am inclined to agree with "an old Lady Pupil," that we value most that for which we have to pay, and also think with her, that the expenses of a well organized Nursing School are so great, that to put it in other words—the persons who benefit must pay. At present, our Nursing Schools are conducted somewhat upon the lines of the Board Schools; the laborious ratepayer educates freely the children of persons well able to educate their own; so with the charitable subscriber to the Hospital, in giving an entirely free education to Nurses, the parent is often relieved of a duty he owes to his daughter as well as to his son.

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