

Matrons in Council.

WHAT IS A TRAINED NURSE?

For what length of time should a Probationer be trained in the wards of a Hospital, and how should that training be organised in order to fit her to hold every position in the profession?



MADAM,—I think when it is acknowledged that there are six grades in the profession of Nursing which might be profitably filled before a woman can be considered thoroughly qualified to occupy the important position of Matron or Lady Principal of a Nurse Training School, the term of training decreed by the Royal British Nurses' Association and endorsed by the Committee of the House of Lords—namely, three years—is the very shortest term in which even a talented woman can be considered a *trained Nurse*, after which she will require to qualify herself for the position of Superintendent Nurse. The system in vogue at my old *Alma Mater*, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, during my term of training, appears to me, after experience in other Institutions, to be the best at present in existence, although, doubtless, it is far from perfect, like every other human arrangement. The complete term of training was three years, divided into extra Probationer (general help); regular Probationer, responsible for a certain number of patients under the immediate direction of the Staff Nurse; Staff Probationer, responsible for a certain number of patients under the immediate direction of the Sister and Staff Nurse; and Staff Nurse, responsible to the Sister and in charge during her absence. For the first six months, as extra Probationer, we did not attend theoretical lectures; after which, for twelve months, when placed on the regular staff, we attended lectures, and after eighteen months passed the primary examination, or were considered unsuitable for further instruction. At the end of three years' experience, having held the responsible position of Staff Nurse, both on night and day duty, we were again examined, and, if we passed, were awarded a certificate of efficiency; when the most efficient amongst us were eligible for the position of Night Superintendent or Ward Sister. So far, so good; but, although this curriculum quite fitted an intelligent woman for the routine position of Ward Sister, it did not train her for the more responsible duties of Home Sister, Housekeeper, and Lady Superintendent; these posts are still often filled by women who have been unable to acquire any training in the duties required, and, as a rule, have to learn their work by bitter experience. In my opinion, a woman should, after undergoing three years' training in the wards

of a Hospital as Probationer and Staff Nurse—of course during that time or before entering the wards, acquiring a knowledge of dietary and sick cookery—should then work for at least twelve months as Night Superintendent and Ward Sister, and then for the same period in the office of Home Sister or Assistant Matron before undertaking the responsible duties of Lady Superintendent of a Training School. There is nothing gives self confidence, and in consequence inspires others with respect, more surely than the possession of sound practical knowledge; therefore, knowledge should be obtained at any cost of drudgery. Five years is, therefore, the shortest time a woman should be willing to work before attempting to control and supervise a Nurse Training School.—Yours faithfully,

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Registered Nurse. Matron, Bridgewater Infirmary.

Nurses of Note.

MRS. COSTER.

WE doubt whether there be many women whose range of experience can be said to extend over the whole period covered by modern scientific Nursing. Such a unique distinction, however, is the privilege of Mrs Coster, the Matron of St. George's Hospital. With sympathetic interest, for thirty-six years, has she watched the development of a problem which has exercised in different ways, and under varied conditions, the minds of a large portion of the civilized world. Not only was she a silent and unobtrusive co-operator in the great movement with which the name of Miss Florence Nightingale is indelibly associated, but she was an independent labourer in the vineyard at a period when the training school at St. Thomas's had just been inaugurated, and was still in the position of an experiment.

In the year 1858, a vacancy having occurred for a Superintendent Nurse at St. Pancras Infirmary, Mrs. Coster applied, and was ultimately appointed, out of a large number of candidates, to the post. On taking up the appointment, as may be easily imagined, she found a condition of things prevailing, of which at this lapse of time we can form but a slight conjecture. There were only six paid Nurses out of a number of twenty-four, and these six could in no sense of the word be described as trained. So inadequate were the provisions made for the sick in this Infirmary, and so little reliance could then be placed in such assistance as was pro-



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