

who desire to become probationers in important training schools, will be required to prove that they possess a good general education, and that this will be tested by means of a written and perhaps also of an oral examination in the subjects of general knowledge. Then those who successfully pass this preliminary educational examination will probably be required to devote several months to attendance at lectures and practical instruction in the primary subjects of a Nurse's education. For example, they will require to learn the principles of Hygiene, as explaining the necessity for ventilation, for cleanliness, and for healthy surroundings; of Physiology, as explaining the methods in which the various organs and tissues of the human body work in health, and the alterations which are made therein by disease; of Anatomy, as explaining the manner in which the human frame is constituted, and the results of injury or illness; of Invalid Cookery, in order that when they require to feed the sick they shall be acquainted not only with the forms of diet which they administer, but also with the most appetising methods of preparing the necessary dishes; of Ward and Household Management, so that when they enter upon their practical duties in the Hospital they shall not be, as most probationers are at present, absolutely ignorant of their surroundings.

In very few hospitals at the present day is such a preliminary course demanded; the probationer enters the wards ignorant of everything connected with the human body, and with the work which she will be required to do. Her time, therefore, is largely occupied in attendance upon lectures and in reading subjects unfamiliar and difficult, while her body is more or less overtired with the unusual exertion to which it is exposed by long hours of standing and by heavy manual labour in lifting heavy or disabled patients. This combined strain upon the mind and the physical strength explains the fact that so many women, otherwise well qualified for the work, break down during the early days of their hospital training. All these drawbacks would be obviated if the probationer, as we have suggested, obtained her theoretical scientific instruction before she entered upon her practical work in the wards, and so was able better to realise what she then saw and handled.

Then the probationer thus prepared would commence her ward work unfettered by other calls upon her time and thoughts, and would be able to devote herself entirely to the practical details of her calling—that is to say, to the actual nursing of the patients. The Sisters, or head-nurses in charge of the Hospital Wards, in the scheme which we forecast, would act practically as Nursing Tutors, teaching the Probationer the best methods of performing the many duties required by the sick, and supervising them in their execution of these details.

A probationer, during her three years' training—and we are taking it for granted that this term would be a generally adopted standard—would be moved from medical to surgical, and then to the obstetric and special wards of the hospital, so that in each branch she would acquire the necessary education and experience. It is likely, we imagine, that before very long, arrangements will also be made by large training schools with the various special hospitals which have done so much in the past both for medical science and for nursing education; these arrangements, taking the form of the ability on the part of the training school to send its probationers for a certain time for special instruction in the affiliated institution. By this means, for example, probationers would go for three or six months to a fever hospital, or to a woman's hospital, or to a lying-in institution according, perhaps, to their special predilections; and the consequent experience, difficult or impossible to obtain in a general hospital, would be of immense value and importance to them in their after work, enabling them to undertake branches of nursing, from which they would, under ordinary conditions, be debarred. It is also possible that this system may, to an even larger extent be taken advantage of by the smaller hospitals, who, with smaller practical advantages, would still be able to afford a very valuable instruction in nursing to the probationers drawn from their own locality.

At the termination of the training it is customary, now, for the Probationer to be examined, and to receive a Certificate of efficiency as a Nurse. But the methods of examination which are in vogue, differ almost as much as the methods of training; and, so far as the certificates go, the variety both in word and application, differs even more greatly. It is therefore to be hoped, as indeed it may be expected, that with a more uniform system of education, there will come greater uniformity both in the examinations, and in the certification of Nurses; that there will cease to be examinations conducted entirely by those who have taught the examined, but that independent examiners will be selected to conduct the examination at each Hospital, in conjunction probably with one or more of the officials of that Institution; and that one uniform certificate of efficiency will be generally adopted.

Finally the trained and certificated Nurse at present goes out from her Hospital into various branches of work, and finds herself in the most remunerative of these—Private Nursing—in open competition not only with women who have not received the same education as herself, but even with others who have received no education at all. She may even find herself working with so-called Nurses sent from reputable institutions, and even from public Hospitals, who are neither by experience nor

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)