

That some extension of the period of training is generally desired, was evidenced by the informal discussion of the subject that took place in this assembly last year; by the suggestions since offered by the writers in our various magazines devoted to the subject of Nursing, and by the fact that since the International Congress some one or two schools have lengthened their course so as to make it extend over three years, while others have this step under serious consideration.

A superintendent of a training school owes a duty, first, to the hospital, and secondly, to the Nurses under her. These duties are of equal importance; the hospital must not be sacrificed, but neither have we any right to sacrifice the well-being of our Nurses; some scheme must be adopted which will prove advantageous to both. I shall, therefore, consider a little in detail the advantages or disadvantages to the hospital and to the Nurses which may result from the adoption of the plan suggested. For the hospital the advantages are already seen. In the first place, the hospital would have better Nurses, since it would be benefited by having more experienced Nurses during the third year of their course. Again, the hospital and training school would be relieved of the disadvantages of having to deal with so much raw material at such frequent intervals, and the school would be enabled to select from the candidates much more closely, and thus a higher standard could be more easily obtained.

If the third year's instruction were made to include a course for Nurses who wished to prepare themselves more especially for hospital positions, the hospital would again be benefited, because, under present conditions, superintendents of schools have no opportunity of learning the administrative duties of such a position until after they have undertaken it. Our present methods of training allow but few opportunities for a woman to gain this practical knowledge; hence the success of a new superintendent of a training school must depend upon her native ability, and such stray knowledge as she may have been able to pick up while occupying the position of head Nurse. More than one Nurse's career as a superintendent has been cut short by mistakes through ignorance in the beginning of her administration, mistakes which would never have occurred had she an opportunity beforehand to become practically acquainted with the duties of her new position. Again, it must not be forgotten that while such a process of development is going on, and the superintendent is becoming competent, the hospital and pupils alike suffer, and the best work and the best teaching are not attainable.

A third year is also necessary in many cases

to complete the training of such pupils, who, while having all the requisite qualities of goodness and reliability, are not intellectually over bright and need an additional year to make them thoroughly competent in their profession. Then, there are others who, while exactly opposite, are bright, quick and easily taught, nevertheless lack a thorough comprehension of the dignity and responsibility which they have undertaken, and who do not fully appreciate the value of the discipline which they receive in the course of their training. For such pupils the protection, influence and teaching of the school during an additional third year is necessary before they can be safely left to their own judgment. In any case, a third year is to be regarded as a period of assimilation or digestion, without which the learning of the first two years will be far less valuable. That many Nurses feel that they are not fully qualified at the end of two years is evidenced by the number of intelligent women who love their work, and who are interested in their profession, and who beg to be allowed to stay another year. By the establishment of the three years' course it is hoped that the number of such women would be much increased, since we may naturally expect and hope that the commercial woman will be excluded by the adoption of this plan, and even if we have fewer graduate Nurses, they are much more likely to be competent, and after all this is the main point. As a matter of fact, a slight diminution in number would not be an altogether unmixed evil. Just now the number of graduate Nurses engaged in private Nursing is, I am told, so great, and is growing so rapidly all the time that many Nurses are without patients half the time. I am informed that in the city of Philadelphia there are so many that a committee of physicians have already held a meeting in order to discuss the possibility of taking advantage of this condition, in order to reduce the remuneration for the services of graduate Nurses—a somewhat unwarrantable proceeding on their part it would seem. But if this question is to be regulated by the laws of supply and demand, then a diminution in the number of graduates, will insure a lucrative occupation to those who have had a thorough training, and who hold certificates of competency.

So much for the advantages of a three years' course to the hospital and to the Nurses. But should this change alone be made, we should be worse off than before, and unless the day's work of practical Nursing be limited to eight hours it would be better to go on as at present. The board of trustees recognise the advantages which would accrue to the hospitals from the adoption of the three years' course, and they

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)