

would cheerfully add on the third year were it not for the fear of additional expense which would be incurred, should the day's work be shortened to eight hours. I shall have some suggestions to make later on, which will perhaps relieve them to a great extent of anxiety on this point. But first I wish to bring forward a few reasons why one change necessarily involves the other. On the question of the length of the day's practical work, we Superintendents of training schools ought to know more than other hospital authorities. We have been through every step of Nursing work ourselves, and should be best competent to judge of what is right and expedient in the matter, and if we are convinced that a day of eight hours is sufficient we should all agree in giving the project our warmest support. We are the representatives of the Nurses, and if we do not advocate their rights and interests, we can hardly expect others to take thought for us.

As I said just now, a Superintendent of a training school undoubtedly has obligations to the hospital in which she works, and is in duty bound to give it her best thought, work and loyalty, but she has, at the same time, obligations and responsibilities also to the Nurses who put themselves under her care.

I am sure that many of you have had some qualms of conscience at the way in which we are sometimes forced, I might almost say, to drive our pupil Nurses during a two years' course. I assure you that I have had myself many anxious moments for the future of certain of my pupils, more especially as regards their health. It is well known that a combination of physical and mental labour is more exhausting than simple manual, or simple mental occupation. It is true that for a time such a strain can be borne without producing any permanent injurious effects, and it is possible in most cases for women to stand the strain imposed upon them for two years, although I am afraid that not all come out of the trial unscathed. If, however, this high pressure is to be kept up for three years, I am sure that the health of the Nurses will suffer. A woman who works physically over eight hours a day is in no mental condition to profit to any extent by class instruction or lectures, and it is very questionable if a woman working ten, eleven, twelve, or more hours a day for three years will be equal to really good work during the third year, even if her health apparently holds out to the end of her time. Able-bodied labouring men are now everywhere advocating a working day consisting of eight hours. If this is a reasonable demand, then we are surely not justified in putting a harder task upon women who are not only upon their feet during the greater part of

their time, but in addition have an enormous tax being constantly made upon their patience and temper, as well as being burdened with no little mental anxiety and responsibility.

From another standpoint let me ask, will the patients obtain the best Nursing in this way, and is a neurasthenic Nurse fit to take charge of patients?

I maintain, therefore, that the three years' course must not be considered at all unless the hours of practical work are shortened, but if the two changes can be made together, then the preservation of the health of the Nurse and the extension of her education and training will be insured. This again will result in an increase in her competency, and consequently will be productive of greater benefits to the patients who come under her care during her training and after she has graduated.

I said just now that we must take into consideration certain means of meeting the extra expenses which might be incurred if the staff of Nurses be increased in order that the hours of work may be shortened. I commend this problem to the ingenuity of every one of my hearers, and shall be glad if the discussion evoked by this paper may bring out something better than what I myself have at the present time to propose. It seems to me that if the eight-hour system was once set in good running order, it would be found that the necessary increase in the number of Nurses would be very small. The two propositions which I would submit are as follows: First, a uniform remuneration for each of the three years, instead of an increase every year, according to our present custom; second, the adoption of a three years' course, with a working day of eight hours, without remuneration.

At the present time the practice is to allow the pupil Nurses eight dollars a month for the first, and twelve dollars a month for the second year. We say in our circulars that "this is in no wise intended as a salary, but is allowed for uniforms, text-books and other expenses incidental to their training." If this money is not intended as a remuneration for services rendered, why is the amount increased the second year, seeing that the expenses are in reality much greater the first year, when the probationer has to supply herself with the necessary text-books and a full set of uniforms. If the amount allowed during the first year is sufficient, then the second year's allowance is more than enough; in any case, the expenses of the third year would not be more than those of either of the other two, and the allowance need not be increased for the third year.

*(To be continued.)*

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)