

THE
BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 780.

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 1903.

Vol. XXX.

Editorial.

THE UNQUALIFIED NURSE.

The recent petition to the President of the Local Government Board, organised by the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association, and signed by nearly all the Matrons holding responsible positions in the nursing world, against the certification of one year's probationers as "qualified nurses" is the most unanimous public expression of opinion ever issued by the heads of nurse-training schools in this country. It affords ample proof that these officials do not consider that one year's training entitles a woman to rank as a trained nurse, and, indeed, for years past there has been an unwritten rule that nothing less than three years' training in hospital wards suffices to afford the necessary experience. But it is nevertheless certain that there are still hospitals which rank as leading training-schools, hospitals whose Matrons have signed the petition against the certification of the qualified nurse, which register their probationers as trained nurses at the end of a year. Others, again, give a certificate to their paying probationers after a year's training, which, as a rule, affords no experience in that important branch of every nurse's work—night duty, and which, further, can give only very partial experience in general nursing. Furnished with such a certificate by a large London training-school, women can, and do, obtain work as private nurses. The wrong done by the institution concerned is two-fold. In the first place, it sends out to the public—who rely on the certificate given as a guarantee of efficiency—nurses who can in no sense be considered as thoroughly trained, and, in the second place, it injures the nurse who has conscientiously qualified herself for private work by three years' hospital training, in some cases because the woman with a one year's certificate undersells her by taking lower fees than those to which the well-quali-

fied private nurse is entitled, but more usually by demanding and obtaining the full fees for inferior work. In either case, both the public, to whom training-schools have responsibilities, and the thoroughly-trained nurse—to whom, surely, they have responsibilities also—are injured. We hope that those Matrons who realise the injustice which will be done by the Local Government Board if it sends probationers out into the world as qualified and certificated at the end of a year, will represent to their own committees that similar injury is done when a probationer's term of training is held to be expired at the end of a year, and, although she may be bound to work for the institution concerned for a further term of years, she is, nevertheless, liable to be sent out private nursing, or to undertake any work which the authorities may require of her, to the detriment of her own training. We have no hesitation in saying that a three years' certificate given under these conditions is misleading, because the public will certainly assume that the certificate implies three years' hospital work.

We hope also that Matrons will use their influence to obtain the abolition of the one year's certificate for paying probationers. A quarter of a century ago, when a one year's system of training had not, with the progress and evolution of nursing, given place to a higher standard, there was some justification for this certificate; but it is now obsolete and out of date, and it is time it was abolished. Is it too much to hope that in the near future the authorities of at least the twelve London hospitals with medical schools attached may take counsel together on the subject of nursing education, decide upon a minimum standard of education, and, while still affording experience to paying pupils who desire to obtain an insight into nursing work, guard the value of their certificates and protect the interests of the public by conferring them only upon pupils who have successfully passed through the full term of three years' hospital training?

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