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Editorial.

THE SELECTION OF PROBATIONERS.

One of the most responsible duties which devolves upon the Superintendent of a Training-school is the choice of probationers; for on her wise selection depends not only the efficient nursing of the sick in the hospital concerned, but of the public in the future, the tone of the nursing school, and the competency of the future teachers of nurses. Presuming that a Matron is possessed of considerable discernment, and conscientiously strives to fulfil her duty in regard to this important trust, surely something more is necessary to determine so important a selection than a few minutes' interview with even the most experienced Matron; for Matrons, after all, are but human, and therefore liable to make mistakes. Yet in most hospitals, with the exception of the check imposed by such an interview, the door of the training-school stands wide to all who desire to enter, so long as there is a vacancy; for in the majority no educational or mental tests are imposed, nor even physical ones, if we except the letter of the kindly family physician who, ready to do a young friend a good turn and help her to a congenial career, responds readily to her request for a certificate of health. "Certainly I'll certify to your physical fitness, with pleasure," and when handing over the desired letter, casually remarks, "I suppose you *are* all right, by the way?"

We need, then, a more searching test for candidates before they are admitted to hospital wards for training, for, once they get even a smattering of nursing knowledge, extending over only a few months, if they are regarded as unsuitable and rejected by the training-school, many at once undertake private nursing on their own account, with what result to the sick may be easily imagined. Yet every Superintendent could tell of pupils who have been dismissed from their school, and who have flourished as private nurses ever since, with the result in the notorious case of Jane Toppan, that she poisoned thirty-

one patients before the public accepted the verdict of her training-school. It is well, therefore, to consider how the tests of an applicant's fitness can be made as stringent as possible.

In the first place she should give evidence of mental and moral fitness, and of having received a good general education. These qualifications should be insisted on by every committee. Having submitted satisfactory proofs on these points the interview with the Matron should be of a searching character, and the Matron should satisfy herself as far as possible that the admission of the candidate to the school will be for its general welfare. Then she should be physically examined by a physician specially appointed by the training-school authorities for that purpose.

If she satisfies these tests, she should then be required to pass a simple examination set by the Matron and teachers of nurses before admission to the preliminary training-school, which, either in connection with individual hospitals or at a Central School, should form the portal for all probationers. Here they are under the observation of competent teachers, and the large majority of unsuitable candidates can be weeded out, so that comparatively few need be rejected when once they enter the wards for training.

Their acceptance or rejection now depends mainly upon the reports of the ward Sisters, and here just a word of warning is needed. It is not the candidate who is of the most use on first entering a ward who necessarily makes the best nurse eventually. A new probationer has her full share of ward work, and the girl who can perform this best without much supervision is apt in a busy ward to win golden opinions. Nevertheless, a less effective probationer, in the first instance, may often prove a much better nurse in her second and third year, when the primary qualifications necessary are not those of a good housemaid, but skill in handling and attending upon the sick, combined with such personal qualifications as patience, self-sacrifice, and devotion to duty.

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