

Matrons in Council.

WHAT IS A TRAINED NURSE?



MADAM,—I fear that I must plead guilty to the error of not having expressed myself with sufficient clearness in my last letter, if Miss de Pledge finds that we differ in opinion concerning the value of labour. In reading over our letters I think it will be found that we are in entire accord on the question of its value. Speaking of my own training, I explained that, seventeen years ago, I paid my guinea weekly to be exempted from the very laborious duties then performed by the Nurses, which consisted, as Miss de Pledge explains, in "learning how to dust, scrub, polish, clean, cook, and various other domestic duties," which she undertook as part of her training, and which, she adds, "would not generally be considered necessary now-a-days." Necessary or not, many of these duties, to a very large extent, have been taken from Nurse Probationers in well organized nursing schools, and delegated to ward assistants. Under the old régime there is little doubt the Nurses paid for their training, such as it was, cent. per cent. in *hard labour*. Now, I maintain that as ward assistants, scrubbers, and male attendants are paid to relieve the former class, they occupy the position and perform the same routine duties which the lady pupil undertook ten years ago. The Probationers of to-day should be called upon, as we were, to help defray the increased expense of training, food, and lodging. Mrs. Okell has touched the key-note of the question when she writes, "any further increase of expenditure must be borne by the Nurse herself, because the public refuses to pay for it." That is the point. With widely increasing expenses, and decreasing contributions, our Hospitals must re-organize, and deal justly with all branches of the community; and I feel sure that there are great numbers of well-educated, self-respecting women who could, and would, contribute towards an efficiently organized nurse training school, if called upon to do so. As Mrs. Okell infers—why should our daughters enter life *in formâ pauperis* any more than our sons? Parents have got to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the fact that the christian law imposes upon them *duty to children*, the *woman-child equally* with the man, and the sooner they are reminded of their duty the better. If one important nurse training school would organize on *just* lines, giving a thorough practical and theoretical curriculum of training to its pupils, and demand just payment in return—part cash and part labour, I believe it would command the very best material in the market, and we should cease to hear the constant complaints concerning the type of woman who now crowds into our Hospitals—being unfit for other walks of life—very much to the discomfort and discredit of all concerned. —Yours faithfully,
AN OLD LADY PUPIL.

MADAM,—I have found in my experience that the system of imposing an entrance fee on all Probationers proves a barrier to many candidates who appear to be

perfectly eligible, but who cannot afford to pay for their training. Among the great number who apply, the choice of applicants—after those who have been weighed and found wanting have been put on one side—is not great, and it does not seem to be wise policy to limit the number still further by making a demand for payment on them which many are not able to meet. If the entrance fees are required to benefit the funds of the Institution, it is, I think, a quite fair arrangement to allow the Nurse the option of paying the entrance fee, or of giving some time to the Private Nursing Staff, after the completion of her training.

M. G. SMITH,
Registered Nurse, Matron of the Royal
Infirmary, Bristol.

MADAM,—In my opinion, all Probationers should pay for the first three months at the rate of a guinea a week; after that time the Matron would be able to see their value to the Institution, and those who are worth having should be paid for their services. I have worked on these lines and found it very successful; most Probationers or their friends can pay this amount. It causes the Nurses to be more determined to succeed if it has cost them this outlay of about twelve guineas. Should the Nurses be failures, I do not think the money should be returned, as it simply goes to pay for board, whether they leave of their own desire or that of the Matron. My decided opinion is against special Probationers; very few of them are thoroughly in earnest. At Bart's, where I spent a happy year as special, it was satisfactory because there was absolutely no difference made in the wards between the work of the specials and the regular Pros. In Hospitals where the specials are not required to do the same heavy work as the regulars, it is impossible to avoid bad feeling between them. A Nurse at the end of three months ought to be worth a small salary. —Yours,
EDITH MAWE,
Matron, Dunedin Hospital.

MADAM,—The question, "Should Nurses pay for their training," is, I fear, a difficult one to answer. I quite agree that "what is worth having is worth paying for;" still, if Nurses pay for training, they ought to be exempt from all charing or work other than such as is essentially connected with the sick; not such long hours, and regular training. As things are at present, I do not think these conditions are possible, for it would mean an increase in nursing staff and ward-maids, such as Hospital managers would not grant. Paying for training will also, as some of your correspondents have already shown, exclude a large number of gentlewomen who could not possibly pay. Would it be possible to make payment the rule in those Schools in the first rank? and as others reached the same high standard, it could be adopted?—Yours faithfully?

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Registered Nurse, Sister in Charge, Throat
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