

## Matrons in Council.

### WHAT IS A TRAINED NURSE?

IS A PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION ADVISABLE; IF SO, IN WHAT SUBJECTS?



MADAM,—The above question which appears in this week's NURSING RECORD is of great interest, and one on which very much may be said. We will imagine the Probationer to be at least of average education, and an examination in anatomy and physiology in their elementary branches, with perhaps a few questions on chemistry, would be of distinct benefit to her before entering the service of a Hospital. During the first year in the wards, her conditions of life are so altered, there is so much to learn, so much hard work to do, that there is little time left for study, and the mind is hardly in a condition to grasp subjects with which it is unfamiliar. The subjects for examination should be *very* elementary, and one advantage to be gained would be, that a Probationer would not enter a ward absolutely ignorant, but would have some knowledge of the terms she heard used—a thermometer would not be an unknown article, nor a stethoscope an instrument of torture. I should be sorry, however, to think this would be all the theoretical instruction a Probationer would receive. In a Hospital where the three years' system is carried out, the terms of training would be one year's work without study, and two years' work with lectures and more advanced study, which would be so much more easily acquired by the practical work done during the first year.—Yours faithfully,

E. L. CURTIS,  
Registered Nurse. Matron St. Mark's Hosp.

MADAM,—The question, No. 2, in the NURSING RECORD, of October 21st, viz.:—Is a preliminary examination advisable; if so, in what subjects? seems a difficult one to answer. In the present stage of Nursing, if an examination were compulsory, I think that many women who would make good, useful Nurses would never join our ranks at all; and yet, on the other hand, an examination might do much to deter young people from rushing into the work, without sufficient thought. Then comes the question—what subjects should be touched upon? No doubt, some previous knowledge of physiology, anatomy, sick cookery, sanitary matters, etc., is very useful during training, but not absolutely necessary. In future years of development it may become so. In my opinion, if more searching questions were asked by the different training schools, it would be of great benefit—questions to ascertain whether the candidate has received a good, useful education, and has obtained some experience in household duties. This is, surely, important, for, in looking back over past trials with Probationers, I remember valuable time was often spent in explaining to some uneducated new-comer things that a little more knowledge would have made clear at once, and again, in teaching a better educated one small household matters that could have been learnt in any home.

H. LAWRENCE,  
Registered Nurse. Matron of the Longton Hospital.

MADAM,—This appears to me a question which, to the first half, can have but one answer—Yes, most certainly. The subjects, of course, one cannot enumerate in quite such an emphatic tone. I have read through, with very great interest, the curriculum now in force at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, and it appears to me quite in the right direction; and there is little doubt that it will be, in a more or less degree, widely adopted by all training schools for Nurses, which wish to keep pace with the times—Grammar, Composition, Spelling, Dictation, Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic. What an elementary course it sounds, and yet, how many so-called well-educated gentlewomen would pass such a test with *distinction*? Not one out of fifty. Personally, I know I should fail in the Grammar and Spelling (as you, dear Madam Editor, can testify), and Arithmetic. I believe I could write the Essay, scramble through the Dictation, and Reading is my forte. We all believe ourselves, in our inmost hearts, possessed of some one accomplishment, and I have always prided myself upon the fact, that had I not in early youth become a Nurse, I should have developed into the great *tragédienne* of the English stage. This amiable little weakness on my part has always been a vast sop to my *amour-propre* (I have never done much in life), and is perfectly harmless, as I do not believe my nearest and dearest have ever suspected my secret. Any-way, I have wandered alone on the sea-shore at eventide, and trod pebbles under foot, instead of in mouth *à la* Demosthenes, and have spouted Shakespeare—in turn the speeches of the inspired Portia, the saucy Beatrice, the rampant Kate, but oftener of all, the ghastly Lady Macbeth. I love acting Lady Macbeth, it is such an immense relief when it is over to know that one has not made oneself liable to the extreme penalty of the law, by aiding and abetting a poltroon of a husband to commit murder, and on a wide expanse of sand, with no one even in sight, and the waves and wind trying to drown one's voice, it is quite marvellous how impassioned one can become; and yet would one be permitted to expound Shakespeare as a specimen of fitness in a Probationer's preliminary examination. I doubt it. Imagine the face of the orthodox Matron and dignified M.D., if one was to suddenly demand the bloody daggers, or treat them to a description of the style of husbands one could wish for "Sundays" and "work-a-days." But to be serious—the benefit of a preliminary examination cannot be denied, and not only should the subjects, before mentioned, be tested, but the individual fitness, apart from elementary education, should also undergo some test. By this I mean, the power of observation, the sense of humour, power of self-control, and adaptability—all invaluable traits in the character of a woman, who is to develop into a first-class Nurse. I forward, for future issue, a page from my diary, dealing with the first interview with the Matron, under whom I had the good fortune to train. It will prove to you the importance she attached to the characteristics, to which I have drawn attention above, long before the "prelim." was dreamt of.—Yours, etc.,

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