

Matrons in Council.

WHAT IS A TRAINED NURSE?

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



MADAM,—There have been many excellent suggestions put forward, at different times, by Medical men and Matrons, regarding Nurses and what is required in their training. I wish it were possible, in the first instance, to pick out the most capable women, with a fair share of common sense, who can and will take an intelligent interest in their patients and work. Then the training of these would be a comparatively easy matter. For this purpose I would have organized classes where the pupils would gain an elementary knowledge of work in the wards of a Hospital. They should be taught the general routine of ward work, viz.: sweeping, scrubbing, and dusting; how to keep their patients and wards clean and well-ventilated; to disinfect linen; the names of various articles in use in a hospital ward, and elementary anatomy and physiology; and they should also learn the essentials of sick cookery. These elementary classes should be well paid for. By *well* I mean enough to cover the cost of lecturers, use of rooms, books, and other necessaries. After this course of practical work, a preliminary examination should be held on the various subjects suggested, and those pupils who pass satisfactorily could be recommended for training. By this method a great deal of unnecessary worry and trouble would be saved, both for the Probationer and the Charge Nurse under whom she would work. In my opinion, Probationers would not break down in health as often as they do now, if, on commencing duties, they had some preliminary knowledge of matters relating to Nursing, *e.g.*, names of surgical and nursing utensils in daily use, the making of poultices, application of fomentations, etc. The first six months in the Hospital should be spent entirely in the wards; then, for a year, the Probationer should attend lectures given by the Matron and Medical Staff on Nursing, Anatomy, Physiology, Hygiene, etc. This should be immediately followed by an examination, both written and practical. The next 18 months would be spent in taking charge of the ward—under the Head Nurse—and learning ward management (and always, when possible, Hospital administration). At the end of three years there should be a final examination, given by an impartial examiner, in all the subjects she has been taught. The Matron and Hospital Staff should have the power of granting marks for general behaviour, good conduct, ward work and management, and, above all, the care of patients. I do not think Probationers should pay for their training in Hospital, but each one take an equal share of the ward duties, and obtain promotion on her merits.—I am, yours faithfully,

ELMA M. SMITH,

Registered Nurse.

Matron of the Central London Sick Asylum.

MADAM,—I am very much interested in the subjects which are suggested for discussion in your columns, and think the idea is a capital one. In reply to the question—"Is a preliminary examination advisable for Probationers?" It seems to me that if our Nurse-training schools followed the example of so many training schools for men, and adopted a preliminary examination in general knowledge on the lines of the Pharmaceutical or any other test paper, with the addition of some questions on Physiology, Hygiene, and Domestic Economy, it would go a long way towards settling the question of special ordinary Probationers. The only defence for the practice of putting special Probationers over Staff Nurses of many years' standing, is that the former are generally educated women, and the latter sometimes quite illiterate, and, therefore, unfit for some of the duties a Ward Sister has to perform. If the fee were made merely a nominal sum, and a simple examination passed on entrance, with a month's trial to prove that the candidate was really practical and industrious, then promotion could be made according to merit and for no other reason.

SISTER JEANETTE,
West London Mission.

MADAM,—As a Matron of some years' experience, I should like to express the opinion that a preliminary examination is, to my mind, of very great importance, and if instituted on really practical lines, as suggested by Miss E. R. J. Landale, a reform calculated to lead to immense improvement in the selection of Probationers. I have for long subjected those ladies, applying for admission to this Hospital (which is a small one), to be trained as Nurses to the following tests. We first have a long interview, at which I make rapid mental calculations, how she shuts the door, walks across the room, shakes hands, sits down, the intonation of the voice (a most important item), choice of language, power of conversation, and range of general knowledge. I then enquire into her antecedents, and make myself acquainted with her youthful environment, and motive for wishing to enter upon the serious life of a Nurse. If all is satisfactory so far, I give her the form of application to fill up in her own handwriting, and after the references are received, if satisfactory, *I invite her to stay in my guest-room for a week*, and to live with me. *I give her nothing to do*, and carefully observe how she does it. This is a sure test, and disqualifies two-thirds of apparently suitable women. If she does not adapt herself to these trying circumstances, I feel sure she is lacking in tact and intelligence.—Yours,

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