

Matrons in Council.

WHAT IS A TRAINED NURSE?

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



MADAM,—Before the discussion concerning the necessity of a Preliminary Examination is closed in your columns, I desire to be permitted to say a word. Admirable as many of the suggestions made in "Matrons in Council" are, none, I think, speak out quite plainly enough concerning the condition of Nurse education and training. We have now arrived at a time when a little plain speaking would be efficacious, and I venture to throw myself into the breach. Why burke the fact—the whole system under which we are now working is merely elementary, and one phase of the stage of transition through which we have been struggling during the past fifteen years. In the end we must organize; every school deemed worthy of being called "a training school," must work upon identical lines, enforce the same curriculum, accept the same standard, and enter its pupils for the same *public examination*. Nothing short of this will satisfy the educated woman of to-day. Much as I love and honour my old Alma Mater—now that one has passed away from the sanctity of its mediæval influence—one must recognise the fact that the Profession of Nursing is not comprised within its walls; there is the great beyond, the world of sickness and suffering amongst all classes that cry out, not for a "Bart's Nurse," "a Nightingale," or "a Guy's Nurse," but for the best Nurse, from whatever school, that can be trained. Who can doubt that the self-satisfaction and exclusiveness of great schools have a directly deteriorating effect upon the Profession of Nursing? No one who has once worked outside their gates. What we Nurses want is what is demanded from men—keen public competition, a high and complete standard of education, no favour, a recognised Diploma, and public State controlled Registration. If this is startling to the community at large, let me repeat it so that it can presently get used to such innovations, and set about carrying them out. Nothing short of this will stamp out the injustices and imperfections of the present condition of Nurse education. Nothing short of State Registration will prevent the Committee of a Metropolitan Hospital utilizing their half-trained (according to its present standard) Probationers' services for gain; nothing else will stamp out the bad and fraudulent Nurse Farm. What we trained Nurses demand is *protection*—protection from usurious persons of all sorts—and if we only combine, we can easily get it. A Preliminary Examination is the first step in the right direction of a future robust professional body—an examination of physical and mental condition—and I rejoice that "dear old Barts" has been as usual in the forefront of progress by instituting a Preliminary Examination for its pupils.—Yours,

CHARLOTTE OKELL,

Registered Nurse. Matron of the Bridgewater Infirmary.

MADAM,—Much interesting matter has already appeared in your columns on the above subject, and, with your permission, I should like to state my views upon the same, even at the risk of, in some degree, repeating what has already been said by your previous correspondents. Whether a Preliminary Examination is desirable or not, must, I think, much depend upon the nature of the subjects proposed to be included in it. Good health is absolutely necessary, and hence, in this, some kind of a medical examination can hardly be avoided; next, one must consider what are the fundamental every-day duties of a Nurse reduced to their elementary form. Are not these precisely those often required in one's own home? That is, she should be able both to superintend domestic duties, such as bed-making, scrubbing, dusting, polishing, etc., and also to carry them into practice. If all candidates were compelled by examination to shew fair competency in these duties before being accepted as Nurses, much friction would be avoided and time saved, and thus they would be able, from the commencement of their ward work, to give greater attention to the sick under their care. A Nurse should know, besides the above, the weights and measures, and the practical application of vulgar and decimal fractions, as these are of every-day importance, for instance, in the proper mixing of antiseptic solutions, and for a correct understanding of the clinical thermometer. I am not sure that any Preliminary Examination in Anatomy and Physiology is desirable; many candidates would, probably, take in a much wider range of reading than necessary, and thus, perhaps, begin their Hospital career with pre-conceived ideas as to the importance of theoretical over practical work. Even a simple theoretical examination might prevent many excellent women with special aptitudes for Nursing, from competing. The knowledge of Anatomy and Physiology is better attained by the systematic course of teaching usually given by the medical lecturers of the training school. It would also be better, I consider, if a Nurse's first year of Hospital life were devoted entirely to practical work, thus leaving the theoretical for the second and third. A knowledge of cookery should be regarded as essential, and then the details of humouring the appetite of a sick person are soon acquired. The most lively recollection of my own final examination is that part which was purely practical by the "Editor of the RECORD," under whom I had the advantage of training. The questions consisted of the best methods of scrubbing, dusting, polishing, and sweeping, with the addition of a test in weights and measures, etc., but this was at the *end* of two years' training. How much more valuable and helpful would it be if such an examination could take place before actually entering the wards.

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