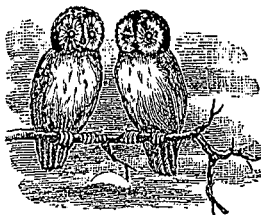


Matrons in Council.

WHAT IS A TRAINED NURSE?

What should constitute an efficient preliminary education, and how should it be obtained?



MADAM,—It has given me great pleasure to have been able, before stating my own views on the subject of a preliminary examination for Probationers, to have had the privilege of reading Miss de Pledge's letter, as her clear style and well-marshalled arguments must distinctly recommend themselves to all who appreciate literary excellence. But as far as the matter in hand is concerned, I must say that my views on many points are opposed to those of Miss de Pledge.

A. I still maintain that a preliminary examination in general knowledge—not that required for a "Double First" or a "Senior Wrangler" but something a little beyond mere handwriting and the multiplication table—should be required of every nursing candidate. A sound education and a cultivated and refined mind are as essential in modern nursing as a strong pair of hands and a backbone. We do not want illiterate and uneducated women.

B. I agree with Miss de Pledge as to the comparative uselessness of home domestic training. The "domestic work" that is, as a rule, taught at home consists far too much in merely assisting in the management and supervision of servants to be of much practical value. When the intending Probationer *does* know a little about dusting, sweeping and polishing, her ideas on the subject are apt to be very different from those of the Sister, who has the trouble of first "unteaching" her what she fancies she knows. I fancy most ward Sisters prefer to instruct an ordinarily strong and intelligent girl, who has no pre-conceived notions as to how the ward cleaning should be done.

C. On this point I am in accord with Miss de Pledge. I do not think a special scientific examination advisable—the object of the preliminary examination should be to test the candidate's general education, and not her special scientific knowledge. The *details* of Nursing, both practical and theoretical, should be taught within the Hospital walls. Graduates of the St. John's Ambulance classes are not always an un-mixed blessing as Probationers.

I think it is extremely undesirable that we should draw our Probationers from the same class as our domestic servants. I fully appreciate the fact that in isolated cases they sometimes make good assistant Nurses, but legislation is for the mass, and not for the individual—"Qui non proficit deficit"—and it would be a distinctly retrograde step if we reverted to the uneducated women who acted in the last generation as Hospital Nurses. They did good work, doubtless, in their day, but it is over; and the standard of excellence of a bygone day can never be the standard of this.

I hold that the Nursing profession is the one above all others that is pre-eminently suited to the well-

trained, well-educated girls of the great English middle-class, healthy in mind and body—not crammed with ologies, but equipped with the sensible, thorough-refined education of gentlewomen—and strong with the results of good physical training in tennis, boating and all out-door games. They spring from the same stock as the men that have made England famous, and they should form the backbone of the Nursing profession.

"Hospitals are for the benefit of the public." Yes, but primarily and before all else for that section of the public known as the "sick poor"—they have the first and most abiding claim upon Hospitals; it is for them they were founded; and the raw Nursing material that will best suit their special needs in their widest sense is that which should be selected for the Probationers of our Hospitals, and I do not hesitate to say that, in my opinion, that is chiefly found among more educated and cultivated women.

There can hardly, I should think, be two opinions as to which class of Nurse has the most refining influence on her ward, or which will almost invariably command most respect and obedience from her patients; for a man, in the rank of life from which our Hospital patients are chiefly drawn, will never readily obey (even when ill) a woman of his own class. Familiarity and gossiping between Nurses and patients are practically impossible in the one case, they are not in the other. An educated Probationer is not either, as a rule, backward in doing her share of ward work; and the objectionable and underbred phrase, "menial work," is more often heard from those who have previously been accustomed to yield the scrubbing brush and dust-pan than from her. Her previous educational training has besides taught her to be exact and to appreciate the niceties of the more scientific side of her work. I may be particularly obtuse, but I fail entirely to see any valid objection to an examination that would simply be a barrier to illiterate and uneducated women; and that would be no hindrance to women of average intelligence and education. Surely, it is not difficult to find sufficient "respectable women," who know a little more than the old three R.'s, suitable for training as Hospital Nurses.—Yours faithfully,

WILHELMINA MOLLOTT,
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MADAM,—It appears to me that, in the arguments which have been advanced in this column of late, some important points have been lost sight of by those who wish to establish an advanced standard of preliminary education for Probationers. First, it should be remembered that there are three orders of workers, after probation is ended, *i.e.*, Nurses, Sisters, and Superintendents; and we may have a variety of social classes, for certainly the profession is a Republic acknowledging only the aristocracy of capacity. Secondly, it would be well to realize that we do not need or wish that every Probationer should, ultimately, become a Superintendent. We require, in choosing them, to bear in mind that we must have a rank and file as well as the higher officers. Thirdly, though it may be urged, and with reason, that the Hospital Nurse may, with advantage, be as well educated, nay accomplished, as any Superintendent, I do not think the same can be urged for the greater number of

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