

for such "failure" is that we "have not been sufficiently supported by the Nurses." While thanking our correspondent for her evident and kindly goodwill towards ourselves, we would take this opportunity of proving that she, and all those whose views she represents, have mistaken the true meaning of the three years' system, and are completely in error in imagining that that system has been a "failure." That "Nurses themselves" have, so far as the majority of the profession goes, "not supported the change" is less questionable; but if it were to be proved to be an accurate statement of fact, it would, as we shall shortly show, only tend to prove the powerlessness of Nurses to advance, or even to retard, reforms—a fact which, in our judgment, demands their most serious consideration.

But, so far as the assumed failure of the three years' standard goes, we may first point out that, nine years ago, there were few Nurse Training Schools which had adopted this standard; that as soon as the Royal British Nurses' Association made that standard an essential plank in its platform, Hospital Committees commenced to inquire into the necessity for such a professional demand; and the inquiry proving to them that a three years' course of training was not only advantageous to the Nurses themselves, but was beneficial to the Hospital working, one after another Institution adopted it; and now, after only eight years' crusade, the great majority of British Training Schools, both in the United Kingdom and its Colonies, require Nurses to enter for three years' training. Those few large Institutions which formerly were satisfied with the two years' term, and which still retain it nominally, can be counted on the fingers of one hand, and it is certain that within a very brief space of time they will also adopt the modern and advanced standard also. The Report of the Select Committee of the House of Lords upon Hospitals, adopted the Royal British Nurses' Association's suggestion, and expressed its conviction, which undoubtedly has already had, and will have great weight in the future, with all Hospital managers, that the three years' standard is necessary; and the only Nurses registered by Act of Parliament, viz., those practising at the Cape of Good Hope, are compelled by law to produce certificates of having received and undergone this term of instruction.

From the day, then, upon which the three years' system was first accepted as advisable by the Nurses' Association, its progress has been rapid and successful; and our correspondent, therefore, as we have said, is altogether in error in considering it to have been a "failure." We venture to predict that in another five years, there will not be a Training School for Nurses in the whole of the United Kingdom, of any size and importance, which has not adopted this standard.

The regulations for a Training School are made by the managers, and the Nurses who are then at work in the School, being paid servants of the Institution, have as little influence in opposing or advancing changes in the system of education, as the ladies could possess who have not yet been admitted as probationers to the Hospital. The influence of Resolutions passed by the Nurses' Corporation is effective only because, and when, they receive the assent, approval, and support of the Matrons of the various Hospitals. Perhaps, in no other calling, is the rank and file so completely powerless in educational matters as the members of the Nursing profession are. The reason advanced by our correspondent, therefore, for the assumed failure is as groundless as the "failure" itself.

But, as we shall show next week, the mistake into which our correspondent and others have fallen, is to imagine that the three years' system, in itself, is the beginning and ending of Nursing education. They are evidently unaware that, nine years ago, the training of Nurses was practically in a state of chaos, and that it was necessary to lay a foundation stone somewhere, in order to obtain that basis of uniformity without which it was impossible to erect an organised educational scheme. The first need and basis in Nursing education, as we shall show next week, was the determination of some fixed term of training, and from that necessity arose the decision that three years' work, at least, in Hospital wards was needful. At that time, the majority of Hospitals trained for only one year; a few large Institutions had the two years' system, and very few, as we have already said, had adopted the three years' standard. It was, therefore, a bold measure which the small body of reformers advocated when they pinned their faith to the three years' system; and it is not too much to say that no one at that time would have been surprised if their

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)