

a few isolated cases of rare ability to rise completely above one's surroundings, that is seen, sometimes, in the followers of any pursuit or calling. If we look into matters carefully, I think we shall find that in our profession we have still too low a standard of preliminary requirement, too short a course and too limited a curriculum, and that our examinations are somewhat superficial. The questions that are asked in our preliminary examinations are such as an ordinary child of fourteen should be able to answer. We have training schools in abundance throughout the country where pupils are accepted who may have had only the merest rudiments of a common school education. Even if a woman possesses many natural good qualities, without a basis of education and refinement we can never expect to obtain a training of the mind, which will enable the nurse to observe, think, and reason, accurately.

It may be natural that all hospitals should wish to have their nursing provided for as cheaply as possible; but the time should be over in this country when training schools are maintained with this as their main object. When boards of trustees have to offer only a partial training and materials for teaching which are absolutely inadequate to give pupils the necessary knowledge, they have no right to establish a training school and grant diplomas. Our training schools should rather lessen in number, but improve in quality. Cities that are large enough, and have material enough to support two good training schools, should not maintain a dozen inferior ones. These statements are made with no thought of any particular hospital or individual, but from a deep-seated conviction that it is a subject of the gravest importance to us if we are working, as we say we are, for a high standard and for the best interests of the profession generally. The question comes down to this. Is it right to supply means whereby individuals may obtain credentials for doing a certain work without at the same time affording them a proper preparation for rendering them competent to undertake it?

Let us now turn to another subject which is, as will be seen, intimately connected with that which has just preceded. Of late the criticism has become somewhat common that the number of nurses who prove unsuccessful in their calling exceeds by far the normal proportion. In a rather severe article in the *National Review* for December, the statement is made that the market is entirely overstocked, and that at present only one-third of our graduates turn out satisfactorily; of the remainder some are thoroughly bad, but the majority are mediocre. The article attributes this unsatisfactory state of affairs to the invasion of the profession by a certain type of rather light-minded, frivolous women, and to the fact that not enough care is taken in eliminating the unfit. It states frankly that there is a growing dislike to trained nurses, so that many people say they will put up with anything rather than to have one of these undesirable young women enter their homes. While declining to accept such a depressing statement as anything approaching to a universal truth, it must be confessed that the criticism has some foundation in fact. What can be done to improve this condition?

Those of us who have looked wearily up and down the ranks of our graduates, seeking in vain enough suitable women to fill the hospital positions of more or less responsibility and importance, which are

constantly opening up, and who often have difficulty even in finding enough capable and reliable women to become head nurses for our own wards, know that we cannot graduate too many first class nurses. But we also know, further, that in order to do so, we need better material to train than the past has afforded.

These two difficulties then—the overcrowding of the profession and the inferior quality of a considerable number of its members—are among the most important problems which we have to consider. It may be asserted that their existence is no menace to the standing which the high character and purpose of our profession entitles us to take. But these two dangers are undoubtedly threatening, and must be faced now or later.

To return to our present work, I must ask you to glance at your programmes. You will see that what we have endeavoured to do this year is to find out exactly where we stand, and just what progress has been actually made. We have talked for a long time about Registries; every year papers have been prepared dealing with this subject, and many suggestions have been made as to the best methods of conducting them. The consensus of opinion favours the Alumnae Associations as the proper centres of control, and the experience of committees from such organisations will be placed before you to-day.

For some years we have been advocating, earnestly and rigorously, the need of a uniform curriculum—a longer course of training and shorter hours on duty. These reforms have been urged upon the profession from the day this Society was organised: and had probably been in the minds of its founders many years before. It will be interesting, and I hope encouraging, for one to receive information as to the attempts which have been made in this direction, and how far they have been successful. Some suggestions will be offered toward the solving of one of our problems—that of the nursing in hospitals for the treatment of special diseases—and suggestions will be made also as to the best manner of reaching that enormous class, for which our fellow-feeling should be great, since the majority of us belong to it, namely, the people of moderate incomes.

Every member of this organisation is convinced of the necessity of giving steady, serious and prolonged application to the work of teaching and training. We have learned that the fair light of justice must shine through all our affairs as administrators, and that we must meet with courage and firmness our many difficulties. "Nature," says Emerson, "when she makes difficulties, adds brains." To gain a consummation so devoutly to be wished, we should perhaps be willing to welcome the difficulties before us. A writer of to-day dwells at length upon the vast services to the world which have been rendered by those of whom all memory has long since faded away, whose names are forgotten, but whose work remains. To leave behind some good work, some ennobling influence, who could ask for more? What need that the names we bear in our short lives should be inscribed on marble or on brass? Sufficient reward for our humble efforts, if we can gain the right to be enrolled among the world's "Forgotten Benefactors."

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