

and the blind, shall be excluded at the outset, and that the tests of fitness shall be sufficiently defined to preclude any but the best all-round women passing through its curriculum, and attaining professional guarantees. Now, I lay special stress on the best all-round women, because numerous defects go to make hundreds of women unfit to ever become good nurses, and numberless virtues are required, as we know to our cost, to make good nurses, therefore the very portal to the nursing profession should be carefully guarded so that weedy individuals may not pass through and have to be spudded up by the way and added to the rubbish heap of unfits. Is it too much to demand that a somewhat severe test should be defined before a woman is admitted to work in a sick ward in any capacity whatever? I know theories are easily demonstrated, but it is when we come to the practical solution of an innovation that we require the counsels of experience. It is so easy to say this and that ought to be; so that if I was to lay down the ultimatum; that every woman who offers herself as a Probationer must be efficient in skilled domestic service (as she ought to be) and that it is the duty of a good mother and a capable housewife to fit her daughter for the same responsibility, such an ultimatum would still leave hospital Matrons high and dry and devoid of Probationers; because many women are neither good mothers nor capable housewives—the average English woman is far too lazy to excel in either capacity—so that we have numbers of Probationers dumped down into the wards, who have not only to be taught the elements of the sciences on which good nursing is based, but have also to be instructed in the very elements of domestic service of which cleanliness and order are the salient features. Watch an average Probationer use a broom, a brush, a duster, inspect the cupboards and drawers under her charge, watch her wicked waste of gas, coals, water, stores, see her mop up her careless slops with a linen sheet, and then ask the *hausfrau*, how, after all these years of average vaunted domesticity, with which she attempts to annihilate the New Woman, she dares to expose her ignorance and incapacity by offering her untrained daughter as a caretaker to the sick. The sad truth must be owned—the average English-woman is not a domesticated person in the sense of being an expert and capable housewife—that she cuddles into her own little cosy corner by the domestic hearth I own—so does the cat—but she is neither thrifty or clever, which fact must be taken into consideration, and met at the outset in defining a practical standard of nursing.

The average middle-class English girl, who has attained her majority, and from whose ranks the professional nurse must be recruited, has to be taught the elements of domestic service,

In trained nursing I rank the Domestic Arts very high; and to a very considerable extent, nursing is domestic service.

It will be a happy day for hospitals, and for the national welfare, when women are given, from their youth up, a thorough knowledge of domestic economy.

But, awaiting the millenium, it appears to me that the very first step towards attaining a Practical Standard of Nursing is to try and provide the means by which it may be attained by would-be probationers. Something has been done on these lines by the Glasgow Royal Infirmary and the London Hospital in instituting preliminary instruction to test and teach probationers—and these preliminary schools would no doubt meet the needs of large and rich hospitals, but are out of the question in considering the needs of numberless small hospitals. Perhaps you will discuss this question. Perhaps a Central Nursing College in London, Edinburgh, and Dublin, to which could be attached local teaching centres in different large towns might ultimately be organised upon such lines, as to bring both the theory and practice of elementary nursing within the grasp of all women, desirous of entering hospitals to be trained and registered as professional nurses.

We should thus lay a firm and sure foundation of practical knowledge, before the Probationer was required to enter upon the responsible work of nursing the sick in the wards. Under expert teachers, her temperament and capabilities would be tested, and she would be compelled to submit herself to an examination, without which experience and certification, it would be difficult to obtain entrance at a hospital of repute.

The next point to discuss would be: What should be the standard of nursing in the wards? One great defect in our present system is the lack of a teaching qualification for Ward Sisters. There is, at present, no test of a Sister's ability to train Probationers as well as to nurse the sick; and the power of imparting knowledge systematically is by no means a universal gift. Some of the best Nursing Sisters I know, are the worst teaching Sisters, and to be qualified to fill such a position, a woman must possess the combination of the two talents. Would it be possible for future Sisters to act as Teaching Sisters in preliminary Nursing schools—attached to their own hospitals?—This would give them experience before having almost complete charge of the training of Probationers. The old system of promoting an inexperienced woman to be a Sister, because she was a woman of quality or of means, has nearly passed away, and will, no doubt, receive its coup de grace from the Matrons' Council.

(To be continued.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)