

The Education of Nurses.

The following article, dealing with the important question of nursing education from a medical point of view, appeared in the last issue of the *MEDICAL TIMES*:—

An important meeting, which was held last month under the auspices of the Matrons' Council, has once more brought before the profession and the public the strong desire which is felt by the leading hospital matrons that a more uniform system of education for nurses, than at present exists, should be established as speedily as possible. There are now some hundreds of hospitals, large and small, in the United Kingdom, which are engaged in the so-called training of nurses. Each institution is a law unto itself; each one gives its pupils instruction in such subjects and in such manner, or perhaps gives no instruction at all in anything, according to the views which for the time being are held by its managers. The great majority of institutions bind their probationers to stay in their service for a term of three years, on the ground that it requires at least that period to educate the pupil in the many duties which she will be required to perform when in attendance upon patients in private houses. And when one considers the multifarious details which medical men now confide to trained nurses, and the excellent results which have been obtained in the treatment especially of acute diseases and after severe operations, though the careful ministrations of such women, it cannot be disputed that the term of three years' training is by no means too prolonged. A great part of the controversy which has taken place over nursing matters has turned upon this question of a term of training, but it appears to be solving itself by the gradual adherence of all the leading institutions to the three years' standard. The matter is one of much importance to the medical profession, because it is obvious that when the services of a nurse are required, the better educated such a nurse is, the more valuable will she be as an assistant. Beyond this comes the further additional advantage that women who have been under careful discipline in hospitals for three years have thereby imbibed that dependence upon, and that loyalty to, medical men which is essential to their harmonious working. And so it is common knowledge that when friction arises between a medical man and a

so-called nurse, it is almost invariably discovered that the woman has never been efficiently trained and disciplined for her work.

It is, therefore, a matter of the first importance to the profession that the careful training of nurses should be enforced, and there can be no doubt that any steps towards this end will receive the powerful support of those who require not only technical efficiency, but also personal loyalty from their nursing assistants.

The necessity for uniformity in education, which is being urged by the leading hospital matrons, and a resolution to which effect was unanimously carried at the meeting to which we have referred, is probably being raised at the present moment in consequence of a general belief that legislation for nurses is within measurable distance. Those who keenly object to midwives being elevated into an order of independent practitioners would welcome legislation designed to place these women, under the title of Obstetric Nurses, in the position which thoroughly trained nurses are well content to occupy—that of dependence upon the medical profession. This is the crucial question which underlies legislation for nurses, and the sooner it is effected and their position legally defined, the better it will be for the public, for the medical profession and for the nurses themselves. The claim advanced on behalf of midwives, that they should be formed into a body of independent practitioners, has revealed the dangers which exist in the present position of affairs; and that women, many of whom have had only a few weeks, or perhaps at most some three months' professional training, should desire to be legalized as uncontrolled practitioners of midwifery whilst nurses who are content to work for at least three years before engaging in work outside their hospital wards, are desirous to remain under medical supervision and direction, is highly significant of the difference which exists between the untrained, ignorant midwife and the well-trained and disciplined nurse. It is, therefore to the manifest advantage of the medical profession that legal sanction and authority should be given to the principle that midwives should be abolished and that they should be replaced by Obstetric Nurses who will be willing to work under, and be supervised and controlled by medical men, as their sisters engaged in medical and surgical work already are.

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