

things should be done, and one can only learn by doing them, but in many of our hospitals much too much of this is done by the nurses.

In one of our largest London hospitals, one whose certificate is eagerly sought for, the nurses do these things not only during the first year, but often for 1½ and 2 years, and it is no unusual thing to hear of a graduate nurse "proing," and then when the bi-annual or tri-annual cleaning comes round when the walls are swept and cleaned, and the whole ward is, so to speak, "spring cleaned," who does it all? The nurses, graduates and pros each doing her share. Under these circumstances, does the nurse not well earn all that she receives?

I think Yes! We are told that "there are ward maids kept." Truly, but she does the kitchen and looks after Sister and her room, and makes up the ward fires, and for these arduous duties receives £15 to £18 per annum, sometimes uniform beside the usual board, lodging and washing.

A nurse's second and third years are much the same as the first, except that after her first year's examination she is often placed on night duty in charge of a ward, and so receives more responsibility, and this naturally increases as time passes.

She still receives one lecture per week, but from either a Physician or Surgeon instead of the Matron. Here the same rule applies, because he is a clever doctor he is not necessarily a good teacher, and much of the value of the lectures is lost because of this.

With all this the nurses live in a vitiated atmosphere, laden with all kinds of germs injurious to health. This, added to the excessively long hours, the very hard work, perpetually standing and walking on polished boards, and the insufficient relaxation and nourishment, causes the numerous cases of complete breakdown or undermined health that one so constantly hears of among nurses.

Is it for this that parents should pay? Pay that their daughters shall be returned to them broken in health and requiring months, often years of care and treatment, before they can again essay to earn their livings? No! emphatically no!!!

Again, appears the question of age. A girl leaves school at 17 or 18. If she wishes to become a nurse (unless she enters a children's hospital, where they sometimes take probationers at 20 or 21), she has five years of her life to fill up before she can even think of beginning the education which is to fit her for her work in life. We constantly see advice given as to how these years may best be filled, and the prospective probationer fitted for her future life. Courses in

anatomy and physiology, all the domestic sciences, to say nothing of obtaining a proficiency in French or German, or both.

These things are not obtained without money, and a great deal of it if one tries them all; and yet, after all this has been spent, the parents must be asked to face the prospect of paying for the actual training, such as it is, with the probability of the daughter's health suffering.

How is it that a nurse is not allowed to begin her training until 23 years of age?

Because the work is too hard. Yet we are told that the nurses receive their education *free*—

Do not their long hours, their admitted hard work, count at all?

Is all the hard work they have to do, done only that they, the nurses, should receive the benefit in knowledge and skill? Certainly not.

Much of the hard work which nurses do, could quite as well be done by charwomen, so saving the health and strength of the nurses for their legitimate and proper work, i.e., the teaching and learning of nursing.

This instantly starts the cry of—"But look at the extra expense it would be to employ 'chars' to do all the ward work." True, the nurses are now willing to do charring, thereby saving that expense to the hospital, that they may pick up or learn, according to circumstances, the knowledge of nursing. It is admitted by everyone that it costs far more to nurse a hospital with only graduates than where there is a training school attached; if that is so, I think no further argument is needed to emphasize the fact that to-day all probationers fairly *earn* all that they receive from the hospital authorities.

That nurses will in the future have to pay, I quite believe, but many alterations will be necessary in the organization of training schools before this can be arrived at. We are told that medical students pay for their education. True, but the medical schools exist solely for the benefit of the medical students. All the work done by or expected of a student is for his own benefit entirely, and to more thoroughly fit him for his future work.

He can pass on directly from the public school to the medical school, his education goes on without any interruption and no time is lost.

If he works well, at 25 or 26 he is in a position to take an appointment as an Assistant or House Officer at a hospital, or as Surgeon on board ship, or any of the minor appointments open to newly fledged practitioners.

His working years may continue until stopped by mental or physical incapacity or death. There is no age limit to the working years of a medical man; rather the reverse, with age comes increased respect for his many years of experience, and he

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)