

governing body. The "Matrons' Council" has now become the most effective nursing organization in England, and, hand-in-hand with America, is making strenuous efforts to secure State registration of properly trained nurses after independent examination. Thus, inevitably, the intelligent and earnest reformers have been driven to the same goal as ourselves. Nothing short of this will ever secure for any country efficient and trustworthy nurses.

Here, as elsewhere, the great difficulty in securing a properly efficient staff of women nurses for our hospitals is rooted in the marriage question, and this, again, is showing itself, even to the ordinary intelligence, to be the most complex and difficult problem our modern civilisation has to grapple with. The old solutions are plainly inadequate. The old reign of custom must give place to some stable and rational basis for family life if our form of the social organization is not to be riven by an unfathomable and impassable "Solution of Continuity." How are we to secure among women who are *gnata pati*, with all the depth and meaning that this conveys to the initiated, the strenuous and sustained effort to which necessity has so long disciplined men? How, indeed! It is clear that we are confronted with a problem which none but the wisest men and women can to any depth realise. Only the fools are confident here. One of its most obvious effects is that the eternally still-hoped-for alternative of marriage paralyses to a very great extent the efforts of all who aim at the association of effort to raise the standard and status of any body of women workers, and of nurses among the rest. Without any definite organization the position and claims of the nursing profession, coinciding with the remarkable improvement which has taken place among us, in the general amelioration of labour conditions, have made themselves powerfully felt. Popular sympathy with their work has done a great deal to strengthen them; indeed, this sympathy has gone so far that many serious abuses must arise unless vigorous steps are taken to guide it in safe directions. The eight-hours' movement has been more or less completely adopted in all our larger hospitals, though the direct cost is increased by about one-third; while the indirect cost is also very great.

A further evil, which seems inseparable from our system of local government, is the unjustifiable interference of hospital trustees in the selection of probationers and the promotion of nurses. The Matron and the Medical Officer, if they are at all fit for their positions, are responsible for the efficient nursing of the hospital, yet members of Boards combat their recommendations, insist on the appointment and promotion of friends of their own; the consequence is that too often the sisters or charge nurses are not of the best type. Promo-

tion has come to most of them by mere seniority, though they lack the qualities that would make them successful outside the hospital. Satisfied with their pay and position, they remain on, growing hard and mechanical in their work and feeling. Year by year they take less interest in the stream of juniors passing through their wards, are more and more disinclined to expend their time and energy in the careful teaching of what and how to observe, how best to relieve minor discomforts, and to cheer and sympathise with their patients. In other words, they either cannot or do not really train each new probationer.

A ward-sister's main duty is not to do the work herself, but to teach others how to do it, and this capacity, or the lack of it, ought to be the chief element in determining promotion. This consideration ought to deter every self-respecting hospital trustee from meddling with things which he cannot possibly understand, and make him leave all such matters to the responsible officers, who alone can estimate the qualifications required.

Besides these incipient evils which are beginning to afflict the nurses' profession, there are others calling loudly for a remedy. It is only in our larger hospitals that it has been found possible to give any systematic training to nurses, or to provide any satisfactory way of testing and certifying their efficiency by examination. In many hospitals not merely are the probationers not properly taught, but there is a positive tendency, which is encouraged on the score of expense, to have as many probationers as possible, who get no pay for a period, and often no regular instruction. The result is such an output of so-called hospital-trained nurses that the profession is nearly swamped by them. They call themselves private nurses, though they in many cases have no certificate, and could not pass any kind of an examination. Doctors too heedlessly introduce such persons into the homes of their patients, where they are quite unfit to exercise the most ordinary of a nurse's duties. They know nothing about nursing, but they add a new and very real, as well as costly, terror to illness and death. They will not or cannot cook anything towards the comfort and proper feeding of their patients; they are chiefly remarkable for their incessant demands for having everybody wait on them, and are in some cases very dangerous members of any household.

I trust no one will imagine that I am in the least forgetful of the noble qualities and services both in hospitals and in private practice, of our really qualified nurses, than whom, as a body, none better can be found anywhere. My only object has been to call attention to obvious evils, with a view to remedial legislation; and I am certain that I will have the support and sympathy of every genuinely qualified nurse in the colony.

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