

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 765.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1902.

Vol. XXIX.

## Editorial.

### TESTS OF PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE.

With the development of nursing education the need is beginning to be felt by some of our most thoughtful superintendents, not only of the establishment of a minimum standard of nursing education, to which women must attain before they have the right to rank as trained nurses, but also of some central system of examination whereby the knowledge of their pupils may be tested on a uniform basis.

The difference in the education of pupils in the various training-schools is no doubt accentuated owing to the fact that the curriculum adopted largely depends upon the conception of each individual superintendent as to educational requirements, and it is mainly owing to the high ideal of the dignity of the work of nursing formed by many superintendents that it has been raised to its present level of educational efficiency.

But, as we have frequently pointed out, the results achieved so far are the outcome of isolated effort, and heads of training-schools have felt, and are feeling, their own deficiency in having had no preparation for the positions they occupy as teachers of nursing. The idea that professional preparation is needed for this work is a growth of recent years, which has found expression in the establishment of a course in Hospital Economics at Teachers' College, Columbia University, under the supervision of a committee of the American Society of Superintendents of Training Schools, in connection with which instruction and practice in the art of teaching are provided, and still more recently a course has also been established in Germany in connection with the Red Cross Society, for training in the duties of superintendents such nurses as in the course of their own professional career have shown a special aptitude for teaching and superintending others.

But, while there are thus indications that the need of uniformity and system is felt in diverse countries, we are far from their universal attainment. The most potent factor in producing them would, without doubt, be the establishment of a central examination in nursing for the pupils of all recognised schools, such as has now been adopted in Victoria, where a conjoint board of medical and nursing examiners has been appointed.

It is a curious fact that, while so far no serious attempt has been made in this country to institute such an examination in general nursing, in several specialties examinations have not only been instituted, but are considerably appreciated by nurses, who voluntarily submit themselves in considerable numbers to the tests imposed, and also pay the fees required in each case by the examining bodies. It is certain that if they were not convinced of the benefit of obtaining the certificate conferred by an independent body they would not go to expense and trouble in order to obtain it. As it is, the object of nurses who undertake the care of the insane is to obtain the certificate of the Medico-Psychological Association, of those who act as midwives to gain that of the London Obstetrical Society, and of those who are qualified as masseuses to pass the examination instituted by the Incorporated Society of Trained Masseuses. It is noteworthy that in each instance the certificate of these independent examining bodies confers greater prestige upon its possessor than that of any individual institution. So far no central examination of maternity or gynaecological or fever nurses has been organised, but as the certificates given by general hospitals do not afford evidence of competence in these branches it is probable that the need felt will be met by their establishment. It is logical to deduce from the foregoing facts that the certificate given by a central examining body in general nursing would confer greater prestige upon its possessor than that of any individual school.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)