

The Training of Gynæcological and Monthly Nurses.

To the Editor of the "British Journal of Nursing."

MADAM,—We are directed by the Council of the British Gynæcological Society to request the favour of your insertion of the following:—

It is generally conceded that the present condition of the nursing world is in many respects unsatisfactory. There is, apparently, neither any accepted standard nor system of education, nor any reliable method of distinguishing well-trained from untrained Nurses. Women are now able to term themselves "Nurses," and thus may obtain most responsible work in that capacity, when their education and training have been quite insufficient to qualify them to undertake it. There is no means by which trained Nurses can be controlled, or of freeing their ranks from those who prove themselves dangerous to the public and discreditable to their calling.

The special attention of the Gynæcological Society has been lately drawn to the nursing question. Its Fellows employ Nurses chiefly for maternity or gynæcological cases; and constant complaints are made of the unsatisfactory character of the present education of such Nurses. A most careful investigation of the whole subject on behalf of our Society has proved, *inter alia*, that a great number of Nurses pass through the larger General Hospitals, and in still greater proportion through the smaller, without having had any training in the nursing of gynæcological patients: while that of Monthly Nurses varies from six weeks to three months in duration, and is quite inadequate for the responsible duties they are called upon to discharge.

For these reasons, the Gynæcological Society has resolved to move in the direction of establishing such examinational tests as will have the effect of bringing about those improvements which are obviously necessary in the education and supervision of Gynæcological and Monthly Nurses. The Society is strengthened in this determination by the excellent results achieved by the Obstetrical Society of London in the elevation of the education of Midwives, and by the Medico-Psychological Association in the improvement of the training and work of Asylum Nurses and Attendants, in consequence of the systems of examinations and certificates instituted and carried on by those two Societies respectively.

The British Gynæcological Society has, therefore, decided at once to institute examinations, and to grant Certificates, in Monthly and Gynæcological Nursing. The three cardinal principles which will be enforced are:—

- I.—That every Nurse certificated by the Society must work only and entirely under the directions of qualified medical practitioners.
- II.—That no woman will be eligible for the Society's examination unless she has had sufficient training both in general and special nursing.
- III.—That the Society's certificate will be withdrawn from any nurse who, at any future time, proves to be unworthy of professional trust.

Medical practitioners employing such certificated Nurses will thus not only have a guarantee that they are of good character and competent to perform the

duties required of them, but also that they are under professional control, and subject to the rules of professional ethics which, it would seem, Nurses generally are at present free to disregard.

A representative Board of Examiners has been appointed, and the examinations of the Society will be held in future once in every quarter.

We are, Sir,

Your obedient Servants,

HEYWOOD SMITH, President.

J. H. SWANTON } Honorary
S. JERVOIS AARONS } Secretaries.

20, Hanover Square, W.,
January 31st, 1903.

Colney Hatch Asylum Under-nursed.

The evidence forthcoming before Dr. Danford Thomas, who opened the coroner's inquiry into the circumstances of the awful fire at Colney Hatch Asylum, threw but little light on its cause. The composition of the annexe consumed was acknowledged to be of appallingly inflammable material—varnish, match-board, saturated felt, and iron.

Dr. Seward, in his evidence, stated that the annexe contained 320 patients, of whom 51 were suffocated and cremated in Wards 4 and 5, two of the wards were used as an infirmary, and to watch and nurse this number of insane persons five nurses were on duty at night! This number was stated by Dr. Seward to be enough, and in excess of that allowed in most asylums.

The nurses on duty were, according to evidence, on the alert when the fire was first discovered, and all acted with commendable promptitude and courage, Nurse Ada Woolford, of X5 dormitory, having, no doubt, by instantly giving the alarm of fire done much towards saving life.

But when we realise that amongst the poor women in these dormitories many were sick, others epileptic, and all insane, it is impossible to agree with the medical superintendent of the asylum that five attendants on night duty to watch and nurse 320 patients were "enough." A large increase in the number of nurses on night duty will be found the safest preventive of a repetition, either at Colney Hatch or elsewhere, of such a terrible disaster. Less barricades and more keys might also be the policy of the future.

Also the exclusion of women from service on the London County Council deprives the Asylums Committee of the benefit of their practical help in the management and inspection of institutions under its direction. Surely it is time all this unworthy jealousy on the part of men of the mother influence in national life was discarded. It is very despicable.

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