

A Uniform System of Education, Examination and Certification.

For the past sixteen years this Journal has insisted on the necessity for the organisation of nursing education. Since 1894 the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland has stated one of its objects to be "to bring about a uniform system of education, examination, certification, and State Registration for nurses in British hospitals," and has done excellent pioneer work in this direction. We, therefore, welcome a leading article in the *Lancet*, referring to these points, dealing primarily with efficient nursing in workhouses in connection with Mr. Sydney Holland's presidential address at the Central Poor Law Conference, and with the report of the Departmental Committee on the Nursing of the Sick Poor in Workhouses.

Commenting on the proposition of this Committee that the number of Superintendent Nurses under the Local Government Board shall be reduced, our contemporary points out that in 1897 the General Order of the Local Government Board stated that it was expedient that Superintendent Nurses of at least three years' training should be appointed. In 1903 their number is to be reduced, and young women of the so-called twelve months' training are to replace them. The *Lancet* pictures the rush of housemaids anxious to possess the coveted qualification or title, and the "disgust of those who have borne the burden of three years' exhausting work, not only at the bedside but at the desk, when they perceive the daily diminishing value of the certificate which they have striven so laboriously to obtain." This is an important point, and we are glad to see its recognition by a medical paper.

The most interesting remarks in the *Lancet*, however, are those in which it refers to the question of nursing education, examination, and certification. Curiously, it shies at the question of inevitable foundation of better organisation in this respect—viz., State Registration. It, however, advocates the appointment of a Departmental Committee to deal with matters of nursing education, examination, and certification in the following terms:—

"Having now considered some of the causes of the failure in the supply of nurses for the workhouses of the country, and having rejected as unsuitable and retrograde the proposals made for an increase in that supply, attention may be drawn to certain factors in the situation which point to the possibility of an improvement in the numbers and quality of the trained nurses annually sent forth. There is no doubt that the teaching capacity of the metropolitan hospitals and infirmaries is not being utilised to the utmost extent. At the large infirmaries a greater number of probationers could be trained. The chief obstacle to increase in the numbers would be the limited residential accommodation possessed by some of them. The ex-

tensive hospitals of the Metropolitan Asylums Board, though established for special diseases, constantly receive cases of other diseases, and other diseases again arise in their wards as complications; yet these hospitals, with such a wealth of acute ailments available as teaching material, give no systematic training. They absorb the certificated nurses of other institutions and make them their charge nurses. Their own assistant nurses leave in order to go to infirmaries to be trained. With an increase of only 20 per cent. in the number of the probationers taught in the infirmaries, and with every hospital of the Metropolitan Asylums Board occupied in teaching, there would be a valuable augmentation in the supply of trained nurses. A word in conclusion upon the training itself. It is to be regretted that there is no uniformity in the systems in operation at the various schools. The number of lectures given, the demonstrations attended, the duration of them, and the extent of the subjects treated are all matters of individual arrangement. There is no standard as to the difficulty of the examination, no consensus of opinion as to the best method of giving marks to candidates or as to the percentage that should constitute a 'pass.' The examiners may or may not have had any experience in teaching nursing. The Matrons and medical staffs of the infirmaries have taken up the training of nurses voluntarily and gratuitously. The work is not demanded by the General Consolidated Order. All these are points for consideration by the next Departmental Committee having to deal with nursing matters. Upon that Committee would it not be well that a few hospital and infirmary teachers of nursing should be asked to take seats? In our view this is the first step towards securing a report of practical value."

Nothing could prove more conclusively the trend of public opinion towards the need for nursing organisation than these remarks. We hope that, having put its hand to the plough, the *Lancet* will continue to support the demands of nurses for efficient education and for professional control. The first necessity is the definition of "efficient training," and the recognition of co-operative training between general and special hospitals, such as those of the Metropolitan Asylums Board. While these institutions afford a valuable training ground in many respects, it is not sufficient without other experience to qualify a woman to rank as a trained nurse.

In regard to the supply of nurses, there is quantity enough and to spare. What we need is an improvement in many instances in the quality.

In connection with the dearth of applicants for positions in workhouse wards, no increase in the number of nurses would meet this difficulty until the conditions under which they work are improved. So long as nurses are required to work under untrained persons, so long will they decline to take up workhouse appointments. We welcome the suggestion of the appointment of a Departmental Committee to inquire into the systems of training in operation in the various schools, the standard of examinations, and the qualifications for

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