

The Need of an Institution for the Education of Nurses Independent of the Hospitals.*

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THE PRESENT RELATION OF HOSPITALS TO UNDERGRADUATE NURSES.

The hospital and the undergraduate nurse have been found to be essential to each other's well-being. In no way can the nurse get a large and varied experience under supervision except in a hospital. For the hospital the undergraduate nurses, under the close supervision of graduate head nurses, give the most satisfactory service that can be had. They are far better for the hospital than the graduate nurses alone, as every physician will admit who has had experience with both kinds of nursing. The undergraduate is not only the best, but she is the most economical for the hospital.

In order to have the benefit of the efficient and economical undergraduate nursing, almost every hospital has established a training-school of its own. In a few instances the schools have been nominally independent of the hospitals, but the connection is a very close one.

It has thus come about that since the earliest days of the trained nurse the education of nurses has been almost entirely in the hands of hospitals—institutions supported by funds given for the care of the sick poor, which have taken up the training of nurses chiefly for economic reasons. Developing under such conditions, it is not unnatural that the education of the nurse has suffered.

Expressions of dissatisfaction with the present system are not infrequently heard. Dr. R. C. Cabot† has contributed an excellent article on the subject, entitled "Suggestions for the Improvement of Training-Schools for Nurses." The Waltham Training School, which is practically independent of the hospital, has established a course of training quite different from the usual hospital training-school, and much more in accord with modern educational ideas. Much that has been said by Dr. Worcester and others in regard to the course of training at Waltham is a most just criticism of the usual training school methods. There is a movement on foot also on the part of the nurses themselves to secure improvement in their education.

As the training of nurses is at the present almost completely in the control of the hospitals, any movement for the improvement of the training must come from the hospitals, or at least have their co-operation. Reforms will be more easily brought about if it can be shown that they will benefit the hospitals

as well as the nurses. It is because of the belief that the interests of the hospitals will be advanced by radical changes in the training of nurses that this communication has been written. The subject was especially suggested to the writer by the problem of nursing in two small hospitals recently established near Boston—one a small general hospital, and the other a special hospital for contagious diseases.

DISADVANTAGE OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM FOR THE SMALL GENERAL HOSPITAL AND FOR SPECIAL HOSPITALS.

In order to have the best nursing, each small hospital must take up the training of nurses. The small training-school has some advantages over the larger ones. The superintendent can give more personal attention to each nurse. The conditions in the small hospital are more like those in private nursing. The disadvantage of the small hospital is in teaching the elementary principles of science on which the science of nursing is based. The instruction and courses of lectures which are given in the large training-schools are a real burden to the small hospitals. As the curriculum of the training-schools is constantly being enlarged and improved, it will become more and more difficult for the small hospitals to give the required instruction. This disadvantage would be overcome if some educational institution would give the instruction to the nurse before she entered the hospital.

Certain hospitals are established for the care of a special class of cases. Thus there are surgical, gynæcological, and obstetrical hospitals, and hospitals for nervous, insane, and contagious cases. In these special hospitals there is the same difficulty as in the small general hospital in giving the proper instruction. In addition to this, the special hospital can give the nurse practical experience only in one direction, and not such practice in general nursing as she ought to have. As a result, the graduates of the special hospitals are at a disadvantage. This difficulty is partly overcome by a few training-schools which send their nurses to other hospitals for more varied experience.

The need of the special hospitals is for an educational institution which would assume the whole responsibility of the training of the nurses, and send them to the special hospital for relatively short periods to get experience in that particular branch of nursing, which would be rounded out by practical work in other special or general hospitals.

The needs of the small and special hospitals have been mentioned first because they are so obvious and urgent. For the large hospitals the present system seems at first sight to be fairly satisfactory. An effort will be made to show that it is satisfactory and not a burden to the hospitals only, because the instruction given is inadequate and the methods of teaching far inferior to those in other professional schools.

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† *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, November 21st, 1901.

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