

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 839.

SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 1904.

Vol. XXXII.

## Editorial.

### THE STIMULUS OF COMPETITION.

It is frequently urged in regard to examinations of nurses that the result is injurious inasmuch as they give undue emphasis to the theoretical side of a nurse's work. There is no ground for supposing that an examination arranged on comprehensive lines, including both theory and practice, would have this effect; on the contrary, the experience gained in New Zealand, where State Registration and uniform examinations have now had a thorough trial, goes to prove that the effect is most beneficial. The system stimulates not only individual nurses but the training-schools also to fresh effort, for no hospital likes the names of its nurses to appear always at the bottom of the list; consequently the courses not only of theoretical but of practical instruction for nurses are arranged with increasing care, thus improving the thoroughness of the education given, and, consequently, the efficiency of the nurses when trained.

The effect of examinations on individual nurses, even when they only compete with pupils of their own standing in the same school, is also wholesome. As was pertinently said by a member of the St. George's, Hanover Square, Board of Guardians recently in relation to the examination instituted by it, "the examination had one great advantage, it made these girls 'buck up,' or, in other words, it stimulates pupil nurses to greater endeavour than they would otherwise achieve, for it is difficult for the average man or woman to work always at his hardest and best if he has no definite object in view. Work under such circumstances is, almost inevitably, desultory and uneven in quality, but the knowledge of a goal ahead, which must be passed before the desired end can be attained, concentrates effort and stimulates endeavour. One of the great features of University life is the healthy competition between the former pupils

of the different public schools for the honours which may be gained. Men from Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Winchester, all feel more or less responsible for the honour of their schools, and the place in the class lists of not a few is determined to no small extent by their desire to do credit to their Alma Mater, a sentiment which is universally acknowledged to be both healthy and creditable. It is reasonable to suppose that the effect would be the same if Central Examinations for nurses were inaugurated. As Miss Isla Stewart has pointed out, it would make nurses much more enthusiastic in their work. As a rule, they are very loyal to their own training-school, and they would not like to be beaten by nurses from other hospitals. The effect, therefore, of competition between the schools in an examination conducted by examiners who are unknown to them, instead of between the pupils of the same school in an examination frequently conducted by members of the staff who have been their instructors, would be to raise the general standard of attainment to a higher level.

Further, the effect of such an examination would be to develop a feeling of appreciation and cordiality between the various schools. At present, nurses are far too apt to over-estimate their own schools and to underrate others. If they met and competed, and were at times beaten in open competition by the pupils of the different hospitals, their regard for the methods of training of these institutions, and for the professional competence of the pupils they produce, would be increased, a feeling which must make for good fellowship and friendliness, and is consequently most desirable of attainment.

Another result of examinations, the value of which must not be overlooked, is that they afford the only available test as to a pupil's assimilation of the knowledge imparted to her during the course of her training. This surely is a strong point in their favour.

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