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Editorial

MATRONS' SIGNATURES ON NURSES' CERTIFICATES.

It is almost incredible that at the present day the propriety of a Matron being permitted to append her signature to a nurse's certificate of training should be questioned, yet impossible as it may seem, it is actually the case.

What does the Matron's signature on a nurse's certificate signify? It signifies that in the opinion of the signer—who has herself passed through a course of nursing education, and presumably has been promoted by reason of special aptitude—the holder of the certificate has passed through the prescribed course of training in practical nursing satisfactorily, and is a competent person to undertake the nursing care of the sick. This opinion has been formed after close observation of the work and conduct of the pupil nurse for a period of three years, during which time the Matron has received periodical reports of her progress from the Sisters of all the wards in which she has worked, in addition to the observations she has made herself.

The Matron's testimony to a nurse's worth must always be a matter of primary importance, and will have the weight to which it is entitled. The signature of a chairman is attached to a certificate, and rightly so, as of the official responsible for the management of the institution as a whole, and, therefore, of the nurse-training school also; but in the large majority of cases the chairman does not know individual probationers by sight, much less by name, he signs their certificates on the representation of those officials responsible for the management of the training-school that the probationer is in every way satisfactory.

The signatures of the physicians and surgeons, who are the teachers of nurses in the school concerned, are also rightly appended to the certificate of probationers, for they have directed their study in the theoretical subjects which it is essential for a nurse to know. They

have lectured to them week by week, and, finally, they have examined the probationers as to the use they have made of the instruction received, and are satisfied of their efficiency. But, except for a period of perhaps a quarter of an hour twice during the three years' course of training, when teacher and pupil are *tête-à-tête* during an examination, the medical teacher of nurses deals with his pupils in the mass—that is to say, in classes, not individually. Nor does he, if in charge of wards, come into direct contact with them. His directions as to the treatment of patients are given to the Ward Sister, who is responsible for their due performance. It is quite impossible that a busy physician or surgeon should know, or personally observe, how or by whom his remedies are applied; it is the duty of the nursing staff, as represented by the Sister, to relieve him of this department of work, and should he not be satisfied with the way in which the work is performed, he represents his dissatisfaction to the Matron, leaving her to investigate and to remedy any cause of complaint, for she as the official at the head of the nursing-school is responsible to the Medical Staff and Committee for its efficiency.

In the case of the Matron, she is in close touch with the probationers during the whole of their training. To her is assigned the duty of superintending their practical work, of watching their progress, of developing their characters, of maintaining necessary discipline. And Miss Nightingale has laid down the principle, which has unanimous endorsement from superintendents of nurses, that "discipline is the essence of training," and that "in disciplinary matters none but a woman can understand a woman." We are well aware of the condition of nursing in our hospitals before women took them in hand, before, under the personal supervision of an experienced Matron, the unfit were eliminated, systems of training organised and developed, and our nursing-schools raised to the honourable position which they hold to-day. For these

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