

less waste of the resources of the institution upon incompetent persons.

Professional training has been described as the very last stage of education, and though true education is always incomplete in every good system of teaching, new knowledge to be of value must be based upon that which has preceded it. Certainly no worthy superstructure can ever be built on weak and unstable foundations. In seeking to decide just what foundations are safe and suitable upon which to build a professional education, we find that standards vary greatly in different countries, and even in different parts of the same country; but an approximately safe standard, so far as America is concerned, for entrance requirements to training-schools is that of High School graduation. The High School stands between the public school and the college, and affords a sound training in the fundamental English branches—a definite knowledge of mathematics, of history, ancient and modern, of literature, and of some language. A full course covers four years, and one who at eighteen or nineteen years of age has graduated from a good High School should have acquired not only knowledge, but habits of observation, accuracy, and thoroughness; above all, she should bring to further her work the earnestness of the student. If we are right in contending for a professional status for nursing, then those unprepared by some such study as is here outlined may be said to be absolutely unqualified to undertake the study of nursing. Concerning the other entrance requirements, a word should be said. While in England the medical profession is engaged in deciding whether or not a candidate for entrance to a medical school shall be sixteen or seventeen years of age, we stretch the matter rather far in the other direction by insisting upon twenty-three or twenty-five as the lowest age limit. Age is often a matter of circumstances rather than years: the way in which those years have been spent, the responsibilities they have brought, rather than their number, tell the story, and frequently prove a more correct guide in helping to decide as to the fitness of an applicant. The ground has been taken that at about twenty-three years of age a woman becomes more settled in purpose, and apt to view life more seriously; but the writer's experience would go far to show that "Follies do not cease with youth," and the troublesome students in training-schools are as likely to be thirty years of age as twenty. While it may be advisable (though it hardly seems compatible with the most liberal education) to set a fixed and unalterable age limit, it would seem as if we might with wisdom place it a year or two earlier than the present standard. There is another side to the question too seldom considered. The high age limit of admission cuts short by just so much the total period of professional activity, already limited by the exacting nature of the physical demands made upon those engaged in it—their irregular hours for

sleep and food, excessively long hours of duty, and their great anxieties and grave responsibilities. Add to this the fact that in most branches of professional work the tendency seems to be to give the preference to the younger, stronger, and more vigorous candidates for positions, and you have a reasonable argument against a very high age limit. The physical fitness of the applicant should be settled by rigid examinations, conducted not by the careless kindly family physician, anxious to assist some young *protégée* to a remunerative occupation, or to provide a cure for a troublesome patient suffering from lack of an object in life, but by a physician of the institution authorised to conduct such examinations. The most searching scrutiny should be made into the moral fitness of the applicant. We know that no women but those who are honourable and scrupulous should be permitted to enter upon the study of a profession entailing such peculiarly grave responsibilities upon those who practise it. We know that nurses must be women of absolutely fireproof character. It is difficult, however, to suggest any measures which will bring satisfactory and reliable assurances upon this point, beyond those which are ordinarily employed in training-schools. Letters from clergymen and others may mean much or little, and the best results are obtained from careful personal inquiry, when that can be instituted. It is possible that a higher standard of education in admission requirements may prove helpful in settling to some degree this difficult and delicate matter; and that a long, severe, and exacting course of study may assist in rendering the work undesirable except to earnest, high-minded women.

Assuming, then, that we have a candidate whose education will correspond to some established standard, such, for instance, as a High School graduation certificate; of age not below a safe limit, say twenty years, but determined somewhat by education, opportunities and environment; of physical fitness decided by careful physical examination from medical men of known competence and impartial judgment; of moral fitness satisfied by searching inquiry—what shall be the nature of her professional education? What shall be the length of the full course, the number of hours of work and study daily? What subjects shall be taught, and what length of time shall be devoted to each? How shall the time devoted to practice and theory be apportioned, and how shall such instruction be given? The length of the course of study in training-schools, beginning in 1860 at one year, has grown from one to two years, and within the last decade very rapidly has lengthened into three years, until now most leading hospitals have adopted that term, and it has come to be pretty generally accepted as a proper period for the full course of training. It has been found difficult to teach fully the number of required subjects in less

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