

The International Council of Nurses.

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AFTERNOON SESSION.

II.—EDUCATION.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS FOR STATE REGISTRATION.

DISCUSSION ON MISS NUTTING'S PAPER.

Miss ISLA STEWART (Great Britain) said she had listened with great interest and some apprehension to Miss Nutting's paper. It might be possible to include all that she advocated in the curriculum of training in America, but she did not think it could be done at present in Great Britain. If probationers learnt the elements of anatomy and physiology—and no thorough knowledge could be obtained without practising dissection—she considered that sufficient. A good deal could be taught as to the action of drugs without practical dispensing. However many years of study a nurse went through, it must be remembered that the pecuniary value for the skilled services of the average nurse would never be more than £2 2s. a week, and there must be some relation between outlay and subsequent earnings.*

Miss Stewart said she felt strongly that nothing less than three years' practical training at the bedside of the patients in hospital wards could be considered adequate. Preliminary training was very largely a financial question. If it could be arranged in connection with central schools it would be excellent. She doubted if nurses remembered very much that they were taught in lectures. She thought there was much wisdom in the assertion of a certain Hungarian professor: "What I teach you is of no use to you; the only knowledge of use to anyone is that which he learns in silence and solitude, with sorrow and sometimes with tears." She was a believer in hard work during the training period; the necessary discipline aided the development of character. For herself, looking back to her own training, she felt glad that she had not served her probation in easier times.

Miss MARGARET HUXLEY (President, Irish Nurses' Association, Dublin) said:—"I have come to the conclusion that three years are necessary to efficiently train an ordinary woman in the art of sick nursing, and that one of the most important and valuable studies preparatory to training is the study of human nature in its various phases.

"It is not possible to attach too much importance to primary education; it pervades the whole character and quality of work, it enables one to estimate and correctly value the unforeseen which so largely enters into a nurse's daily life; therefore, a broad education is to be desired rather than one including the higher special branches of knowledge and of possibly less breadth, and I would suggest, as a minimum standard and workable basis, the sixth standard of Board School education, including a knowledge of such authors as Shakespeare, Scott, Lytton, Thackeray, and Dickens. I mention these writers, feeling that a knowledge of them implies a certain class, who, though not

* In the United States a graduate nurse can earn from £5 to £7 a week.

learned, are more or less cultured, and have at least studied human nature as portrayed by these masters.

"What may be called domestic science is equal in importance to the theoretical education of nurses. Every probationer before admission to the wards should know how to perform all manual labour connected with the hygienic surroundings of the sick, and should be skilled in household work. There may be difficulty in acquiring this skill concurrently with school studies, therefore each nurse-training school should provide for it.

"The first three months should be devoted to acquiring proficiency in invalid cooking, bed making and changing, the correct method of filling water-beds, rubber hot-water bottles, the use of thermometers (clinical and otherwise), the preparation and making of poultices, enemata, &c.—in fact, all details connected with nursing that can be learnt without the actual presence of a patient.

"In enumerating the foregoing, I have not mentioned sweeping, dusting, washing, and scrubbing—vulgarly called 'dirty work'; but as it embodies the fundamental principles of aseptic surgery, it should take a primary place in every nurse's education.

"During these three months, time should be allotted for the study of hygiene, anatomy, and physiology; of these subjects I would emphasise that of hygiene, as being the most important. A thorough understanding of its laws would enable the nurse to carry out essential hygienic details, and under any given circumstance to place her patient in the most favourable conditions for the recovery of health. I am not prepared to mention any particular text-books, but would advocate that those recommended should be suitable for the use of nurses.

"Prepared in the manner indicated, the probationer would enter the wards—where her practical education begins—well equipped to train her power of observation; she would be familiar with the names and uses of the special appliances for the sick, and would be ready and able to take an intelligent interest in the patients, to observe the deviations from health, the effect of treatment, also the use and effect of drugs.

"The time spent in the wards might be divided as follows:—

"Eight months in medical wards and eight months in fever wards, where the probationer would have opportunities to apply ice-bags, poultices, fomentations, leeches, and blisters, carrying out their after-treatment; administer medicines, oxygen, baths, hot and cold packs, nutrient and other injections, including hypodermic injections; the destruction of sputa, disinfection of excreta, beds, bedding, linen, furniture, and apartments; learn to wash patients in bed, the care of their hair and nails, and the prevention of bed-sores, and to prepare for tapping, aspirating, and intra-venous injections, &c.

"Eight months in surgical wards, including theatre work, the preparation and sterilisation of dressings, sutures, and instruments, padding splints, mixing lotions, and the care and disinfection of her hands.

"Three months in gynæcological wards, having the preparation and after-nursing of laparotomy patients, douching, washing out of the bladder, and catheterisation.

"Three months in children's wards, where extra watchfulness is required to note changes and the meaning of them.

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