

The maternity nurse of to-day may be divided into three distinct classes. In the first class come those who after a full general nursing training have subsequently spent some months in learning the special work of the maternity nurse. These often take the opportunity also of qualifying as midwives. This class is comparatively rare. Only about fifteen per cent. of the pupils trained at Queen Charlotte's Hospital have undergone a general training as nurses.

The second class are formed by those who have passed through a course of study such as is required by the Central Midwives' Board, which of course includes maternity nursing, but who subsequently elect to practice not as midwives but as nurses.

In the third-class are those who have studied maternity nursing, but have gone through no special course of practical midwifery.

Such are the maternity nurses as they exist to-day, and specimens of all three varieties are being turned out in large numbers at the present time from lying-in hospitals and elsewhere.

There can, I think, be no doubt that a course of training as a general nurse is an admirable preparation for the special study of maternity nursing, and that in fact maternity nursing is but a branch of general nursing.

I am afraid, however, it is impossible, from financial and other reasons, for all women who wish to occupy themselves as maternity nurses to go through this course of general training. We must accept things as they are, and be thankful that training of some sort has come to be looked on as essential. It must be remembered by those who might be inclined to take extreme views on this point that the lying-in woman is generally not very ill, and it sometimes happens that the fully trained nurse does not find sufficient scope for her knowledge in this kind of case. It is only fair to say here that I know many very capable and reliable maternity nurses who have never had a general training.

This, however, is a matter which is somewhat outside the subject under discussion. We have now to consider the kind of training and the duration of the training which is best adapted to turning out a satisfactory maternity nurse, and at this point I shall ask you to allow me to describe to you briefly the form of training which is adopted at Queen Charlotte's Hospital. The pupils who enter there are divided into two classes and are known respectively as pupil midwives and monthly nurses. The pupil midwife, who generally intends subsequently to practice as a maternity nurse, enters for a course of five months' training, unless she is

already a fully-qualified medical and surgical nurse, in which case the period of training is reduced to four months.

For the first two months she is on day duty in the lying-in wards, learning the duties of a maternity nurse and having two cases under her special care. During this period she attends in the labour ward and looks on at the birth of the babies of the patients that she is going to nurse. During the third month she is on night duty in the lying-in wards, and takes the opportunity of being present at as many labours as possible.

In the fourth month she works entirely in the labour wards, and goes round the wards of the hospital with the visiting physicians.

During the fifth month she lives with one of the out-patient midwives, and attends cases of labour under her supervision and visits the patients so delivered for the first ten days.

The pupil midwife attends a course of lectures on elementary midwifery given by one of the visiting staff, and there are also tutorial or revision classes held by the resident medical officer and the Matron.

The description of the education of the pupil midwife might seem out of place were it not for the fact that the great majority of those trained as such do not practise as midwives, but as maternity nurses, and this course of training is the one which the more educated type of pupil is advised to pursue.

There are, however, certain women who wish to gain their living as maternity nurses who, from lack of certain intellectual qualities, or from a deficiency in their early education, are unwilling to attempt so elaborate a training, and feel themselves incapable of studying for the examination which the pupil midwives have to pass. The training of this class, who are known as the monthly nurses, lasts for four months. For the first three months they are on day-duty in the lying-in wards, and perform similar functions to those of the pupil midwife in the earlier period of her training.

In like manner they go to the labour ward and watch the cases delivered that they are subsequently going to nurse. During the fourth month they are on night duty in the lying-in wards and continue to watch deliveries in the labour ward.

Nurses thus trained probably practice for the most part among persons of limited income who cannot afford fees such as may fairly be claimed by those who have had a longer and more expensive education.

There is considerable variation in the duration of the training of the maternity nurse even among the London lying-in.

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