

The Training of Probationers.*

By Miss I. C. KEOGH.
Matron, Richmond Hospital, Dublin.

While we continue our efforts to attain to a universal standard of education for our nurses, it is a matter of great interest to note the various methods of training employed in our hospitals.

We cannot but realise that, in the question of practical nursing there should be but one common method of training.

It is one of the instances where we can truly say that the best is only just good enough, but until we have obtained that universal standard of education and examination which is so essential for our profession, we must be content to choose those methods by which we can obtain the most satisfactory results.

Of course, each Matron must, to a great extent, adapt her methods to the advantages—or disadvantages—which her hospital provides. Such considerations as the number of her nurses, the arrangements for lectures, the existence of special wards, and departments, etc., indicate to her the best method to pursue.

It is now almost universally acknowledged that much advantage is to be gained by the system of providing a separate Home, where probationers take a preparatory course of instruction in Housework, Bedmaking, Bandaging, Invalid Cookery, the Elements of Surgical Asepsis, and also a course of lectures in Elementary Anatomy, Physiology, and Hygiene, with the result, that when the probationer enters the wards she will (if she is of the desirable type) be a help and not a hindrance to her fellow workers.

It is not possible for all hospitals to have the advantages of such preparatory Homes, but, in my opinion, they are most desirable, and this system contrasts very favourably with that of sending the probationers straight to the wards, to find their feet as best they may. Which of us does not know the advent of the new probationer? We can each recollect what we ourselves endured as such, or what we, in our turn, had to endure from others in like difficulties.

The first year of training is a most important one for the probationer, both mentally and morally. Even though she may enter when no longer in her early twenties, and may already possess well formed ideas and opinions of her own, she will be easily influenced by her new surroundings.

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What she sees, hears, and is taught, either by her own observations, or by the instruction and example of others while her mind is still pliable, and undulled—so to speak—by the necessary routine of hospital life—this she will carry with her throughout her professional career. It is in her early days that the groundwork is formed on which may rest the nurse's success or failure, and very often, too, the credit of her training school, of which she will be a representative when she goes forth into the world as a certificated nurse.

Great, therefore, should be the care with which both Matron and Sister should strive to develop the best that is in the probationer's character and personality, to cultivate her powers of observation, accuracy, obedience, punctuality, and sympathy towards her patients; to instil into her mind the necessity of loyalty to her superiors and to her training school, and of working amicably and unselfishly with other nurses under all circumstances. It is because I think these matters so essential in the training of a nurse, that I consider a year will be well spent if devoted to them, together with the practical nursing, and general ward work which will be taught her from the time she first enters the wards. I do not propose to mention in detail the subjects with which a probationer should be fully conversant at the end of her first year's training, at which time her knowledge should be tested by examination, both written and oral, but I think that very special care should be given to practical instruction in aseptic methods. The importance of surgical cleanliness in connection with wounds, dressings, instruments, etc., should be instilled into the mind from the very first. An *intelligent* interest on this point is absolutely essential, if a probationer is ever to become a successful surgical nurse.

In many training schools the greater portion of the nurse's theoretical instruction is deferred until the second and third year, by which time she should be able to appreciate more fully the value and importance of such instruction.

It is also advisable to leave the training in special subjects, such as theatre work, house-keeping, catering, etc., until the nurse is nearing the end of her general training. She will then, I think, realise more fully their great value, and will, if she be at all ambitious for her future, endeavour to go fully into these subjects, which are so essential in the training of those who desire to obtain administrative posts.

It is encouraging for nurses to note that in many hospitals where special departments do not exist, the authorities endeavour to secure for their nurses training in fever nursing, mas-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)