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EDITORIAL.

THE STATUS OF POOR LAW NURSE.

In converse with several Poor Law Infirmary Matrons, we are pleased to find they are fully alive to the danger of the proposed scheme for adopting a central examination and certificate for nurses trained in Poor Law institutions. It is indeed a fundamental mistake to stamp these nurses as a class apart, by setting up a separate standard for them, instead of drawing closer the ties which unite them with their professional sisters trained in general hospitals.

Nowhere has greater advance been made, during the last half century, in the training of nurses than under the Poor Law. One has but to go through the wards of one of our great London or provincial infirmaries at the present day, to mark their orderliness and brightness, the smart alertness of the nurses, the contentment of the patients, to realize that the quality of the nursing will bear comparison with that maintained by the general hospitals. Indeed, the true nursing spirit which embraces in its outlook all the sick, whether interesting or uninteresting, simply because of their need, is perhaps developed at its best in a well-ordered Poor Law Infirmary, where destitution gives the right to admission, whether the patient is pleasant or cantankerous, the case interesting or uninteresting. To exhibit to all such patients the gentleness, tenderness and consideration which, superimposed upon technical skill, are infallible tests of a good nurse, needs the devotion of women of high quality, and those who successfully pass the test are entitled to rank with the best.

Yet still the taint of the bad old days, so graphically portrayed by the late Miss Louisa Twining in "Workhouses and Pauperism," clings to the Poor Law

Infirmery, and in the public mind its nurses certainly rank a semi-tone lower than the hospital-trained nurse, and, we are afraid, we must add, the hospital nurse is still sometimes somewhat superciliously inclined towards her infirmary-trained sister.

The best method of breaking down a barrier which is purely artificial is to organize the education of hospital and infirmary nurses on the same lines, to subject them to the same examinations, to confer upon successful candidates the same State certificate.

The value of a certificate given under State authority is demonstrated in the case of that from the Central Midwives Board, by means of which, wherever trained, a woman receives the status of "certified midwife," a uniform qualification recognised throughout the country.

We are therefore opposed to any system of examination and certification which places Poor Law nurses in a class apart, believing that the interests both of the patients, and of the nurses themselves, are best served by the maintenance of one minimum standard which all must attain, and beyond which all can progress, as circumstances and their individual capacity permit.

We believe that any other course would prove a set back to the movement for the efficient care of the sick, to secure which women of the type of Agnes Jones laid down their lives, and others, of whom this supreme sacrifice was not demanded, have devoted their work, their energy, their ability through a long series of years.

Those who have the welfare of the infirmary nurse at heart will be well advised to promote by all means in their power the Bill for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, under which she will receive her rightful status.

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previous page

next page