

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, REGISTERED NURSE.

No. 1,972. Vol. 80.

NOVEMBER, 1932.

Price Sevenpence.

THE ONE PORTAL TO THE STATE REGISTER.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—Much has been said in favour of adopting the recommendations of *The Lancet* Commission on the matter of dividing the Preliminary State Examination into two parts, but one wonders if the practical issues have been grasped fully. We all welcome the co-operation of the Head Mistresses and the possibility of obtaining candidates having a wider education especially as regards the basic sciences of Physics, Chemistry and Biology; and if Elementary Anatomy and Physiology can be included in the heavy curriculum so much the better for the groundwork on which to develop the professional education. But surely it would be a deplorable thing to deprive the student-nurse of *revision* on these professional subjects, given in their true setting and for their practical application?

It is impossible to give the school-girl the knowledge of Anatomy and Physiology essential to the nurse for the effective understanding of surgical and medical treatment in the male and female wards. The knowledge as given in Hospital becomes impersonal, related to the patient, and is peculiarly selected for clinical needs. That many hospitals have failed to provide such teaching from the Medical Staff is a misfortune, but it should not be the cause for advocating school instruction at an immature age without the possibility of giving the subjects their professional and practical import. Also if these subjects are studied and put to examination test so long before they can be used, much of their value in elucidating surgical and medical conditions will be lost and the standard of Surgical and Medical nursing must inevitably deteriorate.

It is the duty of the General Nursing Council to secure for the nurse in training adequate theoretical and practical instruction under suitable conditions to enable her to qualify for State Registration. It is not its duty to adjust the nurse's education to the economic needs of the hospital—though such are always most sympathetically considered.

The only way to ensure that the nurse is given her due and has the adequate revision on these subjects is to maintain the Preliminary State Examination in its present form and test Candidates alike after a year's experience at least in the hospital wards.

Has it been realised that the so-called benefit may chiefly accrue to the small affiliated hospitals and that the onus of preparing the nurse to qualify for State Registration will fall on the major hospitals? Will the

latter hospitals accept affiliations as readily as heretofore?

Surely, too, the advantage is over-estimated, as comparatively speaking but a handful more candidates out of the huge total required can be recruited from the Secondary and High Schools in this way. No nursing school will be able to select its full nursing staff from among these favoured few. Classes in Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene will still have to be given to the majority and incidentally those student-nurses will be deprived of the stimulation of competing with keener minds, and the Sister Tutor of bright spots in much dreary work.

The Municipal Authorities may well welcome the scheme as with their dual control of school and hospital the elementary school-girl who has left school at fourteen years can be coached and made word perfect for such time as she can sit for this premature half of the Preliminary State Examination, but that she will retain any intelligent recollection of the subject or, if memory holds good, can be expected to apply her knowledge to any practical purpose, is beyond the hope of the most sanguine Sister Tutor.

The value of the trained nurse is becoming more and more consciously appreciated in the national life; the demands on her intelligent co-operation are ever increasing. It is time that her education was rated at its economic value by Hospital authorities, and that it should be budgeted for as an important part of the hospital service. Why should the Medical Staff of a Hospital be expected in these days to give instruction without adequate fees? Why should not the lectures be put on a sound financial basis—the outlay would not be great—and arranged to be delivered at hours that are convenient to the Nursing Staff?

But with a General Nursing Council satisfied with mere academic instruction on what should be applied knowledge, the progress of the Nurse's education and the just acknowledgment of her economic value will be set back for years.

The Hospitals will undoubtedly benefit by longer service in the wards, and be spared for some years more from making financial outlay on the education of the Nursing Staff; but the Nurse is in danger of being exploited and denied her right to a professional education that will fit her to benefit by post-graduate training in other and in higher branches of her profession.

M. A. GULLAN,

Sister Tutor, St. Thomas's Hospital,
London.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)