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EDITORIAL.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROBATIONERS.

For some weeks past, under the heading, "The Training of Nurses," a correspondence has intermittently appeared in *The Times*. Overwork, long hours, bad food, and incompetent Matrons appear to be the four cardinal crimes of hospital administration of which the public complain.

No doubt here and there there may be cause for complaint, but comparison of conditions in the past with those which now obtain, appear to those of us who lived through the 'eighties to be marvellous. Only then nursing was a vocation, and the harder we worked the greater the satisfaction we enjoyed—and hundreds of us are still alive to tell the tale!

"Fathers" and "Mothers" of probationers are very loquacious. One writes: "Mothers of probationers know that in some cases the administration of the Matron's office is extremely bad, and they are of opinion that it should be supervised rigidly by the hospital authorities."

But there is an all-important question, usually overlooked, which requires attention, and it is this: What contribution do the parents of applicants for hospital training make towards providing a supply of suitable candidates? Hospital authorities might have much to say on this point. True, many young women with a real appreciation of Nursing as a vocation, and physically suited to meet the demand it makes upon them, apply for training. But, out of fifty applicants a Matron is fortunate if she can select ten whom she considers thoroughly suited to fulfil the requirements.

First, as to physical fitness. Do parents always consider the responsibility entailed by parenthood? the duty of so ordering their lives that the children they beget shall be healthy. Next, as to their nurture—the nurture, moreover, not only of the body, but of their whole being—body, soul and spirit. Are their children brought up in the fear of the Lord and to love their neighbour? Are they taught that self-denial, self-control, self-discipline, a sense of public duty, of devotion to the land of their birth are qualities to be striven for? Do they themselves set their children an example in the exercise of these virtues, so that throughout their lives these children will hold them in affection and honour.

Realising that it is the right of their children to be well prepared to play their part in the battle of life,

do they endeavour to cultivate their minds, to make them proficient in the domestic arts (the foundation of good nursing), to be considerate, sympathetic and unselfish?

Were this usually or even frequently the case, what a wealth of fine material would be available from which to select probationers for hospital training. Most Matrons would, however, if questioned, report regretfully that only a modicum of probationers of this calibre is obtainable. Many applicants are, they say, of poor physique and mentality, and thus unfitted to bear the strain entailed by nursing, or to understand the psychology of sick people, they are of indifferent education, and written applications are frequently in uneducated handwriting and badly expressed.

In the selection of probationers, regard must always be had to their suitability for the serious work they will be required to undertake, not only during training but when, at its conclusion, they go out into the world to practise their profession. Technical proficiency, though essential, is not sufficient, for the nurse has to deal with sick human beings, often sorrowful and perplexed, and the healing of their sickness may often depend on the solution of their sorrows and perplexities, and for this wide sympathies and clear judgment are needed. With a helping hand, she stands at the Gate of Life and the Gate of Death, with gifts of consolation which should include not only the patient but his household, in wise and understanding sympathy.

We have directed attention to the initial equipment which the applicant for training as a nurse should possess, there remains the consideration of the need for the exercise of parental responsibility covering the training period.

Why is it that while the majority of parents are ready to plan and to make personal sacrifices to enable their sons to qualify for the business or profession of their choice, comparatively few consider it their duty to regard the preparation of their daughters for their chosen careers with the same seriousness? Yet, in regard to Nursing, which has now become a highly skilled profession, requiring a costly training, it is increasingly evident that the whole expense of providing this teaching should not fall upon hospital authorities, but that parents should be willing to contribute towards its cost.

We invite the public, to whom the knowledge, skill and resourcefulness of nurses is of vital importance, to consider this question.

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