

grant a diploma, without special powers given for that purpose by Act of Parliament or Royal Charter; but we believe that there is not a single incorporated body in the whole of the United Kingdom which has legal authority to grant certificates of competency in Nursing. These documents, as now issued by Hospital Committees, are, therefore, in the eye of the law, nothing more nor less than expressions of private individuals' opinions—highly ornate "characters" in fact. Now, this state of affairs is not only very derogatory to an important profession such as Nursing has now become, but it has had very important consequences, and teaches most important truths, to which consideration may with great advantage be devoted; while it may be taken for granted that it is only a question of time when the most drastic reforms must be made.

Hospital Certificates, then, being, as we have said, documents unauthorized and unrecognized by law, have had a fictitious value, to which they certainly are not entitled, placed upon them by the individuals issuing them, thus misleading both the public and Nurses. The natural results of this want of legal authority have been that no Committee has been able to withdraw a Certificate which has once been awarded to a Nurse, even if its possessor has subsequently become utterly unworthy of confidence, because the "character" once given to a Nurse—or to a domestic servant—becomes legally her private property; that the smallest Cottage Hospital has every whit as much—or as little—legal right to issue Certificates as the largest General Hospital possesses; and that consequently from John o'Groat's to Land's End it is now becoming difficult to find a Hospital of any size which does not train and certificate Nurses. No further argument is surely required to show the chaotic confusion in which Nursing education is now involved, or the consequent detriment to the Nursing profession and to the sick public. The consequences to the Hospitals have probably been no less serious, although less plainly apparent; because it must detract from the reputation of such an Institution that, as the records of Police Courts

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unhappily prove, persons of notoriously bad character can perpetually produce an official-looking document testifying that in the judgment of such and such a Hospital its possessor is deserving of implicit trust and confidence. The public which knows that other professions are under due control and that, in their case, the authorities which confer a licence to practice can revoke it immediately if due cause be shown, absolutely fails to understand the justice or the propriety of Hospitals launching upon the sick as efficient and trustworthy, Nurses whom they have taken little trouble to make so, and whom they have no power to so maintain. It moreover appears, to unprejudiced observers, passing strange, that, after thirty years of Nurse Training, the confusion should be increasing, that the absolute lack of system, method, and order in the education of Nurses should be as manifest now as it was a quarter of a century ago. It may be urged that Hospitals have been too busily occupied with the care of the sick to be able to devote much attention to the training of Nurses. There would be more force in this argument if the Hospitals had not undertaken this work of their own initiative; still more, if it were not notorious that the most backward and lethargic of these Institutions are strongly opposed to any proposal of reform on the part of a certain outside and progressive body. The indisputable facts remain that, for thirty years, Hospitals have pretended to train Nurses and yet that, at the end of that time, there is no recognised curriculum of work, no recognised standard of necessary knowledge, no recognised tests of efficiency, no legal certificates of competency, and actually even no generally accepted term of training.

We are well aware that Hospital authorities will strongly disapprove of our action in calling attention to these patent defects. It is much more comfortable to let things continue in the same old groove for our day and generation, and to leave reforms to be dealt with by some one else. But it is difficult to hibernate in these days. The Nursing Profession has proved—at great cost to itself—its willingness to spend and be spent in the service of the sick. It demands, now, that its

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