

THREE YEARS' TRAINING.

BY

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(Concluded from p. 170.)

ANOTHER reason for lack of enthusiasm in this and other respects is that few take up nursing from sheer love of it, or a desire to do what they can for their fellows, I allude to natives; a fair majority of pupils are widows, victims of the baby marriages, or again victims of the same custom, but not living with their husbands, their relatives finding it an excellently lucrative profession, and not wanting them at home, put them in hospital, expecting them thenceforward to earn their own living and not be a burden on them. Is it likely that such a pupil is actuated by the highest motives? She has to work, as well in this way as in any other. She is far better housed than at home, she is well and abundantly fed, she has no house work—she is waited on as never in her life before, and ere long she will actually receive pay, and after three years will start to become a rich woman.

Is it not all important that she shall have sufficient time in hospital under supervision for all the nursing methods she is taught to become sheer *habit* so that, even if her whole heart and soul are not in her work, a right way of doing things may become routine practice, and even if the spirit is lacking that would lead to earlier perfection and thoughtful care so necessary to the maintenance of a high standard, yet the main thing in the end is obtained through a sufficient period of daily performance. If English women require three years with all the love and enthusiasm so many hundreds exhibit towards their calling, will those with less require a shorter time?

When a pupil attains her third year, she becomes of real use to her training school. Under the three years' system the patients' highest welfare is catered for, critical cases always having the advantage of being cared for by a nurse of some experience, and the Superintendent and charge nurses are also the gainers in that they are not continually harassed by the knowledge of incompetent nurses of only a few months' standing being the only ones possible—in an eighteen months, or two years' training—to take the responsibility when their necessary off-duty hour comes round.

These are some of the advantages accruing from a three years' course. Are there any *disadvantages*? I do not know of any.

It raises the standard of nursing; it inestimably heightens each individual nurse's power for good, making her an infinitely better nurse, better woman frequently for being longer under British tuition, and in an atmosphere of purer Christian morals and habits. A three years' example and continual contact

with an English Superintendent of itself is not to be despised. It provides a far higher rate of skill and competency for the hospital patients, it takes a load of anxiety from the hearts of those in charge, although quite enough is left! It is not long since the hospitals with which I am connected raised their term of training to three years and I need not specify to a body of trained nurses who have the responsibilities of Superintendents' posts to bear, the innumerable ways in which in every department the wonderful change for the better is *felt*; and a thing which creates its own *atmosphere* for good in a hospital is a thing to be reckoned with, imitated and supported to the very best of our power.

Once more. The three years' course at home is essential for admittance to the Nursing Associations of Great Britain, to the Army Nursing Service or Reserve, as well as to the obtaining of *any* post.

Are we, whilst fully aware of this, we who would have scorned as not worth the time thrown away on it any certificate less than three years, to teach the nurses entrusted to us, who come to us ignorant of *everything* to do with the profession, to be satisfied with less, knowing full well that even now, and much more in the years to come, no post will be given to those holding less than the three years' diploma, nor admission permitted to the Nursing Association about to be formed (Bombay Nursing Association), which will legalise the three years' training, uniformity of teaching and examination, and Registration. Bombay is the first to form such an Association, and there is no reason why the whole of India should not follow suit. Shall we deny our nurses its privileges by advocating a shorter period of training and so debar their membership?

Finally, if we do not give our pupils three years' training we are not using our hospitals and training schools to the best advantage, because with every thing to our hand to turn out a reliable finished article, year after year only half trained women, with whom a little knowledge is a *very* dangerous thing, will be passed out, certificate gained, with an ignorant confiding public ready for them to work their unpractised half-taught art upon. Surely hospitals were not built and maintained, or training schools started and provided for to this end. I should be very sorry to send one of my eighteen months' probationers out private nursing; it surely is our duty to protect the public.

It is argued that surely a nurse who has been eighteen months in a well-ordered hospital is better than a native *dai* who has no notions of cleanliness, etc. In the matter of cleanliness let us hope our eighteen months' nurse *has* learnt something, but in most other respects, an ignorant *dai* is taken at her worth; she is not expected to know, whereas a nurse, whom the public simply know as "certificated from such and such hospital," is looked upon by the majority of natives as quite as good as a doctor and seeing that she is *expected* to know she will almost *always* pretend that she does and almost certainly do irreparable harm—her time in hospital has not been long enough to give her

or to teach her the moral courage, to say she does *not* know. Nor has it been long enough for her to know that it is doctor's work she is expected to perform and not nurse's, and so it is no disgrace to her that she is not able to do it. In three years there is time to teach a nurse her work ; what she is not taught she knows is not her work, and she sends for the doctor. Our three-year nurses have had time to learn very thoroughly how utterly wrong it is to attempt doctor's work, they are taught and they daily see it practised and practise it themselves that the two professions are distinct although so dependent on one another, and that a doctor is as unable to perform nurse's work as *vice versa*.

Let us protect our nurses from such temptation, let us see to it that they have time to learn and practise the arts of their profession, let us thus use the means at our disposal to their greatest advantage.

Let us protect our patients by giving them the benefit of proper nursing, let us protect the outside public by providing them with competent nurses, and let us take at least one burden from the shoulders of those who are in charge of our hospitals and training schools and give them the benefit of keeping their nurses just when they begin to be of real use, and above and before all, let us maintain the standard of our profession and insist on advance, progress in every department on every point, so that we may be proud of our Indian Nurses and so that our own English profession may not be ashamed of us as lowering the banner, giving way to the fatal apathy of the East, and missing the opportunities that have been given to us in that we are making and moulding the nursing of the Indian Empire. Shall it be worthy of our beloved Motherland ? It is in our hands. May we not fail her in the work she has honoured us by giving us to do.

"Wherever there is haunting disease, prevalent sickness, or sanitary conditions ever so little imperfect there is a work of Florence Nightingale's to be carried on. If soldiers die prematurely, or if operatives, or needle-women, or paupers, or any sort of people whatever are swept off by preventable maladies, there is work of hers waiting to be done. And so there is as long as kind-hearted young women pine in idleness and vacuity instead of helping the many who need such care as they could give."

She was "sorry that she was so famous," as surprised, perhaps, as Grace Darling was at the same thing, only that she had not time to sit and think it over, as Grace did over her sewing in the lighthouse chamber.

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