

Open forum

IN MANY PEOPLE'S opinions, nursing is not considered to be a profession. For instance, when the patient is asked what he thinks about nursing, he may well say that it is an art, a vocation or dedicated work, but it will be noticed that he rarely calls it a profession. Why is this?

The whole structure of nurse training seems to be against classing it with the three great professions of divinity, law and medicine. It is a misnomer to call the nurse a "student" nurse while in training. If we insist on calling her this, we do the nursing world a grave injustice. We give to the girl the title "student" yet refuse to give her the status. This immediately brings the profession into disrepute.

Having worked in an industrial concern in my pre-nursing days, I found that the three years training for the general Register was very similar to an apprenticeship in many ways. In a factory one is taught to watch a procedure and then, when familiar and confident in the operation, to carry it out under supervision. Time is spent in a college of further education for a period during each week. In fact, many a time the apprentice receives more class room instruction than the student nurse. Everyone in industry is proud to have served an apprenticeship and would most certainly look very suspiciously at anyone claiming student status.

Apprenticeship system for nurses

The trainee nurse of today is an apprentice. She watches the skills of trained nurses and copies until proficient. Even in this she is at a disadvantage; in a factory the apprentice is outnumbered at least ten to one by trained and highly skilled persons, but the nurse often receives her teaching from other students. Truly, a very poor state of affairs.

Unless we are more successful with the recruitment of pupil nurses and can staff the wards of the future with enrolled nurses, the student will remain an apprentice and will not have the time to observe, read and to inwardly digest the techniques, science and art of nursing.

It has perhaps not occurred to many nurses that, after qualifying, they have far more chances to become students and thus qualify as professional people. If the nurse embarks on a course which takes her away from the bedside and hospital for a time, she may well make a reappraisal of her work and aims in life, and this is much more likely to produce a truly professional woman.

At the present time, apart from scholarships (which are few and rather hard to come by), there are the courses for ward sisters and tutors, and courses in hospital and public health administration. These periods of study can broaden

Open forum is a feature designed to encourage discussion and the expression of opinion on professional matters. Contributions of not more than 1,000 words are invited from readers, and should contain comment or reasoned argument on any subject involving the nurse's work, or personal relationships. They will be published anonymously if wished, but the name, address and qualifications of the author must be known to the Editor. All published contributions will be paid for

It is not professional!

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the outlook of many a nurse and give her a better understanding of the nursing profession.

Industry and business can teach us much in so many ways, particularly as far as using staff to the full advantage is concerned. Remember, in commerce unless you are efficient, happy and go ahead you are out of business. How often I have wished the same could be said to apply to nursing. It appears that no matter how inefficient one is unless a major catastrophe is committed one is absorbed into the mass of general inefficiency that unfortunately still exists in many hospitals today.

It is a condition of many business employers that their staffs who desire promotion should attend a college of further education. It should also be the right of Registered Nurses to follow a course of further education to expand their general education, or take courses in commercial studies or business efficiency and management to prepare themselves for senior posts. But dare some staff nurses ask for the same two or three nights off per week for 36 weeks of the year? Many a ward sister would become quite faint at the suggestion, and the nurse would be told to think of her patient, hospital and profession and not of herself. But, in actual fact, that is what she is already doing.

Let it be remembered that while we teach a narrow concept of life connected only to the patient and the hospital, we fail to make provision for the future. When the time comes for the suggestion that the matron should be replaced for her administrative duties by an assistant secretary (nursing) on the group secretary's staff, all senior administrative nurses must be able to put up such a barrage of indisputable arguments formed by a wide experience of professional business methods that the proposal will be quickly dismissed.

All in a day's work

IN ADDITION to the treatment of leprosy conditions, e.g. ulcers and reaction, many patients have been admitted into the hospital for the treatment of other conditions. These have included a number of accidental injuries. For example, one patient is reported to have been digging so vigorously in a vegetable garden that he hit himself on the head with his spade. Three stitches had to be inserted into the wound. Another patient fell from a tree while cutting branches. He sustained an open fracture of the skull, fractured ribs, clavicle, one arm and the other wrist. He has since made an excellent recovery.—A. D. Asher (Purulia, West Bengal), writing in "The People of this Pasture," annual report of The Mission to Lepers.