

be lengthened after a time, just as the medical education has been lengthened.

Without going at all into the details of such a year's work, one could say that among the subjects studied would be the following, which are now taught in the hospital training-schools: *anatomy and physiology*, sufficient to give the nurse such a knowledge of the human body and the functions of its various organs as she should possess; *chemistry*, especially the chemistry of cooking and of digestion; *pathology and bacteriology*, to give her a general knowledge of disease processes, especially of the infectious diseases, and of suppuration; *domestic and personal hygiene*.

These courses should be given by persons having a wide knowledge of the subjects taught, and should be especially adapted to the needs of the nurse. The lectures should be well illustrated. Laboratory work should form an important part of the course. The development of the powers of observation, of reasoning, and of judgment should be one of the chief objects of this preliminary training.

One can easily imagine a year's work planned especially for the needs of the nurse which would be exceedingly interesting and stimulating. With such a preliminary training the nurse would approach the practical work in the hospital in an entirely different spirit.

Each hospital cannot possibly give such a preliminary course as has been outlined. Even if it were possible, it would not be an economical system. A single plant—the same corps of teachers, the same lecture-rooms and laboratories—could provide for a number of different hospitals. It would be an advantage to have several sections with courses beginning and ending at different periods of the year. In this way all the nurses would not be ready to begin their practical work at the same time.

If there were an educational institution to give this preliminary training, the hospitals could require all candidates to furnish a certificate of having taken such a course, and could select the best of those presenting themselves for the hospital positions, just as is now done in the case of house officers.

The nurse's diploma should come from this educational institution, rather than from the hospital. Its award should represent good work in the preliminary course, together with satisfactory service in a hospital in which there was a high standard of nursing.

There appear to be no serious objections to such a system from the point of view of the hospitals. They will be relieved of all instruction except in the practice of nursing. It seems certain also that the hospitals would be supplied with better nurses, and would receive better service. A nurse will more intelligently take up the work of preventing and treating bed-sores if she has already learned something about the cause and formation of bed sores

If she has studied anatomy she can more readily be taught to syringe the ear or pass a rectal tube or catheter. She will more intelligently carry out the practice of asepsis if she has some knowledge of suppuration and, in some simple experiment which she herself performed, has found suppurative bacteria on her own hands.

The chief gain for the nurse from such a change will, of course, be that she will have a better preparation for private nursing. Too often a nurse's work deteriorates after a few years' absence from the hospital. It may happen that she spends many months with a single case, during which time her experience amounts to practically nothing. With a knowledge of the *principles* of nursing as a foundation for her training, she will not so easily lose her hold of the work. With a better trained mind her reason will more often come to the aid of her memory in meeting emergencies.

Other changes and reforms in the training of nurses are needed. Dr. Cabot has suggested some of the most important, and the Waltham Training School has many excellent features which should be followed by other schools. Such reforms are sure to come if the training is wholly in the control of an institution whose only object is to secure the best possible education for the nurse.

Any plan to increase the educational features of a nurse's training is sure to be met with the objection, just as in the early days of the trained nurse, that there is danger of a nurse knowing too much and overstepping her position. Experience has shown, however, that increased education does not have that effect. It is a *little* knowledge which is dangerous. Diagnosis and treatment of disease would not be taught the nurse any more than at present. The nurse's broader education will enable her to see her own work and position in truer perspective.

The establishment of such radical changes as have been suggested, for which the co-operation of so many varied interests is necessary, will require great tact and judgment. If, however, all parties concerned have a true interest in securing a better education for the nurse, such a plan could be carried out.

What has been said here is intended only as a criticism of the present *system* of training, and not of the work of those who are engaged in teaching or practising nursing. On the contrary, it is felt that the fine work that is now being done under such adverse conditions is the best indication of the good results to be derived from an education worthy of the profession.

The National Training School for Midwives.

It is announced that the War Office has provided a site for the general and maternity hospital which Miss Gregory hopes to establish at Woolwich as a training-school for midwives.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)