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Editorial.

THE EDUCATION OF PRIVATE NURSES.

The frequent criticisms passed upon nurses, and the undeniable growing dislike on the part of the public to employ trained nurses unless their employment is an absolute necessity, is an intimation that we should consider our ways and judge ourselves, so that we may not be judged by others. While it is true that many of the failings attributed to trained nurses cannot rightfully be laid at their door, but are the characteristics of ignorance and incompetence, we must at the same time admit that the well-qualified nurse is by no means always a popular person, and the question must present itself to the more thoughtful amongst us, are the failings complained of as a rule personal ones, or do they arise from defects of training, and, if so, can they in any way be remedied?

Beyond professional skill—which as a rule it is conceded that the modern nurse possesses—she must have other qualities if she is to succeed as a private nurse; amongst them, tactfulness, patience, adaptability, resourcefulness, common sense, unselfishness, and courteous manners. Are these characteristics which the present system of training is calculated to develop? From the frequent complaints of visitors to hospital wards of the brusque and off-hand way in which they have been received, we cannot but think, to take one instance, that the virtue of courtesy is one which might be more generally cultivated. Not only for the sake of the institution concerned, but also because an abrupt and dictatorial manner will certainly be prejudicial to the success of the nurse who leaves the hospital to take up private work, the duty of courtesy should be inculcated both by precept and example upon nurses in training. It must be remembered, further, that lack of courtesy is not only, as some would have us believe, merely a lack of polish in a "diamond in the rough." Courtesy is the out-

ward sign of inward grace. If our attitude of mind is one of consideration for others, of forgetfulness of self, of desire to lighten the burdens of those with whom we come in contact—and, failing these qualities, we had better leave the work of nursing alone—then it will be quite impossible for our behaviour to be inconsiderate, selfish, or rude. A good tree will bring forth good fruit. If, therefore, it be true that nurses as a class are lacking in courtesy, we must search for the cause not on, but below, the surface. Tactfulness and patience are also qualities which can be cultivated by attention to the mainsprings of our lives. Adaptability is largely a question of temperament. There are some persons who can fit into and do useful work in a groove; remove them from that groove, and it is a work of time for them to settle comfortably into any other. To such women ward work, with its settled duties and regular routine, offers a useful field of work, while they are temperamentally unsuited for the ever-changing conditions encountered in private nursing. We doubt if resourcefulness is a quality which is cultivated much during the period of training, and this is greatly to be deplored, as it is one which is constantly demanded of the private nurse. The pity of it is that the tendency of all hospital training is to produce excellent ward nurses, but to leave much to be desired in the education of the private nurse. The successful private nurse is usually one who has learnt her deficiencies in the school of painful experience, and has had the good sense to rectify them. It is unlikely that our training-schools will ever turn out the best private nurses until they have wards for paying patients, where the pupil nurses can be thoroughly instructed in the methods of the care of individual cases. From the educational point of view such a departure would probably be justified by results, while, undoubtedly, it would be a boon of which the public would not be slow to avail itself.

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