

## The Quality of Thoroughness in Nurses' Work.

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The subject of the home in relation to the question of a three-fold education has of late years been well studied by well-qualified investigators, who have pointed out clearly and emphatically the shortcomings of the present day in this connection, and have sought for and recommended various remedies, through the application of which we may hope to arrive at a better state of affairs; but up to the present time the ground has hardly been broken and no great general advance has been made. Specialised efforts, such as these preliminary courses for student nurses, have already accomplished something directly and indirectly, and are doing an immense amount of good, inasmuch as they have emphasised the necessity for similar education in all forms of work.

Thoroughness in any form of education must have its roots deep laid in the home, and we women have much to do with it there, and are answerable in a great measure for the present inefficiency, ignorance, indifference, and waste. For the souls of the little children are ours to begin with, "Marvellous delicate and tender things," says Olive Schreiner, "and keep for ever the shadow that first falls upon them—that is, the mother's, or, at best, a woman's." The world requires not more children, but a better quality, not the waste products of human life that so many are to-day. But at the present there seems to be but little hope for that ideal education for the child in whom lies the world's welfare, for the home is one of the few institutions left that still keep the drawbridge up and refuse to let progress and improvement enter within their gates. The individual still regards his home as his castle in its most conservative sense, and still clings to old traditions, old systems, and time-honoured cook-books, and refuses to come into line and be guided by association and combination, by economic laws and principles, and by the specialisation of labour in its true sense which makes for thoroughness as no other way can.

But women cannot be held entirely responsible for the increasing difficult conditions in the household and for the wholesale lack of thoroughness within and without. Progress in many forms has taken out of it a great variety of work that was once done in the household by women, and the time formerly spent in these various duties has not been fully accounted for in other forms of activities. How long will it still be assumed about house-keepers, as it formerly was about nurses, that they

are born and not made, and that the only essential required is to be a woman; that a taste and knowledge for all things domestic is hers by divine right; that she intuitively knows all about the care and bringing up of children, the laws of health, hygiene, sanitation, foods and their preparation, suitable clothing and furnishings? And yet such a groundless assumption leaves her at the mercy of two very unstable teachers, instinct and experience, the former sometimes lacking, and the latter at all times to be acquired at a great cost. So at the present moment we have the spectacle of each household trying to be a training-school unto itself in domestic affairs, wasting the time of both mistress and maid in vainly trying to teach and to do things without any adequate knowledge of underlying principles, busy making patients for the doctor and nurse by jeopardising the health of families by their woeful ignorance, and, later, themselves falling by the wayside a prey to worry and worn-out nerves.

Nor are these the least of the woes that befall the modern household through its want of proper organisation, its old-time methods, and its modern dangers. The rapid accumulation of great wealth, and its consequent tendency to luxurious forms of living and ease, have brought us very near to that point in the order of social change when a large class of women are in danger of becoming useless supernumeraries without an excuse for existing and a menace to the nation. The average man of the day devotes his energies early and late to the making of money, economising labour at all points to compass his purpose, only to end in pouring his wealth into the hands of a wife or children, who expend it in such profusion and lavishness of ignorance as has made Americans stand for greater extravagance than perhaps any other civilised people.

Even a superficial consideration of the question, then, will readily show that the inefficiency of the trained nurse can justly be placed only where it belongs—in the lack of proper early education; and while the preliminary course of instruction for other reasons is excellent and will probably always exist, it is to be hoped that it will not always be necessary to devote so large a portion of the time to household economics. Any adequate remedy for the present state of affairs can only come through a true education of our women. They must be trained, disciplined to bear their due share of the work needful for the helping of the nation; they must be taught that the true value of money lies not in the luxury it may heap about them, but in the opportunities it affords, and that the true joy of living can only be found in congenial work. It would be well if all appreciated the fact that the existing or faulty order must inevitably continue until our women of wealth, refinement, and intellectual attainments combine their talents, leisure, and intelligence to bring the home into its proper

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