

## The Home Preparation of Hospital Probationers.

By Miss M. LOANE,

*Superintendent of Queen's Nurses.*

"So kind, so duteous, diligent,  
So tender over his occasions, true,  
So feat, so nurse-like."  
—*Cymbeline.*

In the course of the last few years my advice has often been asked by girls who told me that to become hospital nurses was the great desire of their lives. These girls have varied in age from fourteen to twenty-three; they have varied in social position from Board School children, young servants and factory hands, up through every grade to the wealthy and leisured classes. They have been eldest daughters, youngest daughters, only daughters, superfluous daughters, and idolised daughters. Their degree of mental culture has ranged from a pathetically imperfect knowledge of reading and writing to a firm grasp of mathematics and a wide—if inevitably shallow—acquaintance with the chief literatures of the world. Nevertheless, I have been struck by the curious similarity of their views of hospital life and work, and of the training necessary to fit them for it. None of them realise that they are simply exchanging a small house, where one or two persons may occasionally be ill, for a large house where there are always many persons ill, and that precisely the same knowledge, gifts, qualities and accomplishments necessary or desirable in the one are necessary or desirable in the other, but in a higher degree. All conceive of "training" as a thing given to the nurse from without, passively received, and dealing entirely with technical matters. All consider their home duties, whether cleaning out the kitchen and minding the baby, or writing invitations and decorating the dinner table, or playing cribbage with their grandmother, or helping to amuse their tired father in the evening, are unalloyed trials and hindrances in their path. All are surprised, and not a little displeased, when I tell them that there is no imaginable form of home life which will not supply the most indispensable parts of hospital training, and that in the course of two or three years the busiest girl, with the aid of a few text-books, can acquire a very useful scientific foundation for the subjects that she has learnt practically in the daily course of her life.

Let me go over this home preparation for hospital work more in detail than I can in conversation with these young friends, and then let them consider if my advice is as hard to follow, or as unpalatable, as it seemed on first hearing.

I shall suppose that I am speaking to an average girl in an average social position, one who left school at sixteen or seventeen, who did not work

very hard when she was there, who lives in unintellectual surroundings, and at nineteen or twenty has already forgotten so much that the questions of her little brothers and sisters seldom turn into means for raising her in their estimation, and that, although she is welcome for the present to the home she enjoys, it is tacitly understood that if she does not marry by the time she is four or five-and-twenty she will have to find some means of earning her own living.

First let her take stock of her mental acquirements, and ask herself where, and how far, they come short of what is expected of a trained nurse.

*Reading.*—A nurse must be able to read aloud, clearly and intelligently, and without obvious fatigue or nervousness. In hospital life she may often be called on to read prayers, either for a single patient or for the whole ward, and as a private nurse, reading aloud may form a considerable part of her duties. In order to strengthen her voice and acquire facility, it is a good plan to read aloud for a quarter of an hour every day, choosing the leading article of a newspaper, or a volume of history or of critical essays, invariably consulting a standard dictionary for the meaning and pronunciation of any words with which she is unfamiliar. These words, with their accentuation carefully marked, should be written in lists in an exercise book, and read over until they are firmly imprinted on the memory. If there is any person in the house who likes, or will endure, being read to, it will, of course, be far more beneficial than reading alone with doors and windows closed.

*Writing.*—It is absolutely necessary that the nurse's writing should be clear, for her own sake it should be rapid, and, if by any possibility it can be made beautiful, it will always be a recommendation to her. If her writing fails in any of these particulars, she should get some friend whose caligraphy is justly admired to prepare a set of copies for her, and write one regularly every day, besides controlling at all times any tendency to illegible scribbling. Clear writing must be accompanied by correct spelling, and the would-be nurse must avoid the smallest carelessness in this particular. Many a worthy woman has had her application for employment contemptuously thrown aside because she has confounded "where" and "were," or transposed the *e* and *i* in "receive."

*Speech and Voice.*—It is of the first necessity that a nurse should speak her own language correctly, pleasantly, and distinctly. If the aspirant had any idea what a means of moral control a refined voice and a certain easy fluency of speech would be with her poorer patients, and how much irritated the more educated sufferers are likely to be by frequently-repeated grammatical errors, uncouth provincialisms, and meaningless catchwords, she would set to work at once to weed her speech of solecisms, of slang, of unlovely colloquialisms, and of

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