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Editorial.

NURSES AS TEACHERS.

The primary object of the training of nurses is that they may render efficient care to the sick. Whether the probationers who enter our hospitals become competent to do so depends largely upon the systematic instruction they receive during their period of training, for it is certainly possible, even for an intelligent woman, to spend a period of three years in a hospital and emerge very ignorant at the end of it. She may learn by practical experience in the wards, but if she is not well and systematically taught she will inevitably be unacquainted with much that she ought to know, much that she has a right to expect to have placed before her in a lucid manner by those who are responsible for teaching her. Although it is increasingly realised that Matrons and Sisters require special gifts beyond those of ability in nursing and ward management, the great importance of their work as teachers has scarcely yet received sufficient recognition. We all know of hospitals where certain wards are favourite ones with the nurses, because as they tersely put it "Sister teaches you such a lot." The point of view seems to be that the Sister, in excess of the duties required of her by the Committee, goes out of her way to be good to the probationers and of her own free will gives them instruction to which they have no right. But it certainly should be the recognised duty of the Sisters throughout a hospital to teach the probationers working under them, a duty which should not be left to the inclination of individual Sisters to neglect or discharge at will, but for which they should be held responsible by the hospital authorities. It thus becomes

evident that those certificated nurses who have given evidence of ability leading the authorities to contemplate their promotion to the responsible office of Sister should themselves be instructed in the art of teaching. Few have had such instruction before entering a hospital for training, and it is obvious that whatever natural ability in this direction a nurse may possess, unless she knows how to use it to the best advantage she cannot give out the best of which she is capable, and consequently there will be a waste of power on the part of both teachers and taught.

The same truths apply with even greater force to Matrons. It cannot be too strongly insisted that the Matron of a hospital is the principal of the training school, and as such largely concerned with education, and it is therefore of paramount importance that she should understand and be competent to apply to the organisation of the school under her supervision the best educational methods.

That nurses have felt this need is evident from the fact that the efforts to afford them opportunities for training as teachers have been mainly inaugurated by themselves. The course of instruction at Teachers' College, Columbia University, U.S.A., which has for its object teaching nurses to teach, was established by the American Society of Superintendents of Training Schools, and is maintained by personal contributions of nurses. The Victorian Trained Nurses' Association has established an examination for Matrons, and our own Army Nursing Board has inaugurated a similar test before Sisters can be promoted to Matronships of military hospitals. It is evident, therefore, that nurses are alive to the importance of ability to impart knowledge as a qualification for those holding teaching positions.

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