

Shall Training Schools for Nurses be Endowed?*

BY HENRY M. HURD, M.D.,

*Superintendent the Johns Hopkins Hospital and
Professor of Psychiatry, Johns Hopkins University.*

(Concluded from page 227.)

As in the past, so now training schools for nurses suffer from an imperfect appreciation of their true scope on the part of their promoters and of the public generally. In the past, owing to the lack of any endowment or proper means of support for training schools, in many instances it was customary to send nurses out into the community during their period of training to earn money for the school in order to maintain it. The position of the nurse thus away from the school was akin to that of the tourist in the Cannibal Islands, who, when he was welcomed to the feast, found to his surprise that he was personally expected to furnish the meal. The effect of such a practice has been altogether bad. The nurse doubtless learns something of human nature by these semi-charitable excursions into the homes of the well-to-do, but she loses far more than she gains. Orderly, systematic instruction under competent supervision is impossible. A nurse engrossed in the care of a very ill patient in a family at a distance from the hospital cannot attend class exercises or pursue her studies to any advantage. She gets an impression, moreover, that her class work and proper instruction in her duties are secondary considerations, and that the chief part of her training is her practical work. Furthermore, the poverty of the school and the withdrawal of many nurses necessitate excessive hours of work for the inadequate staff which remains. There are never too many nurses for the work of an active hospital, and if hospitals like these are to be adequately nursed, those who remain behind must work over-hours. The position of the pupil nurse is a deplorable one. Deprived of capacity to acquire knowledge by reason of fatigue and nervous exhaustion, she cannot profit even by the meagre and imperfect instruction which under more favourable circumstances she might secure. Another and more deplorable feature is the over-emphasis which is thus laid upon the commercial side of nursing. Nursing is no longer viewed as a profession to be acquired through education and hard study, but a trade to be pursued solely with a view to getting a living. It is but natural that a nurse should feel that theoretical instruction is of little value when it

is the custom of the hospital and training school to interrupt her education at any time to send her out to attend to patients in no way connected with the school, or when the nurse is kept away from her studies and class-room by the excessive demands of the hospital upon her time. It is well-known that no first-class school of any sort, and no form of higher education, can be a profitable business enterprise; that the teaching of theology, of law, medicine, and of pedagogics, or instruction in the strictly technical schools, cannot rest upon a commercial basis and pay its proper expenses. It should ever be borne in mind that nursing the sick is now a calling as much as law, medicine, or theology: that it enters into the life of the community to a greater extent even than these professions, and that the families of the rich equally with the poor are concerned in the proper education and training of nurses.

The experience of our medical schools is of interest in this connection, as showing how it is now impossible to conduct a first-class school as a commercial venture. Formerly, when medicine was taught by lectures, and students were instructed *en masse*, it was possible to secure an ample and one might truthfully say an excessive compensation from students for the instruction given. There were no outlays for laboratories, and no arrangements for clinical teaching. Physiology, pathology, clinical microscopy, pharmacology, physiological chemistry, histology, and embryology were unknown, and their teaching was ignored. They had few salaried instructors, little apparatus beyond a simple chemical outfit, and no bedside instruction. This is now changed, and the old-fashioned medical school finds that it must transform itself into a true educational institution, with many laboratories and much expensive apparatus for teaching or go out of business. Falstaff's fatal disease, "consumption of the purse," is inevitable with many of them.

The medical schools which remain in commission must have an ample endowment to place medical education upon a proper footing and do good educational work. It is equally true that a similar endowment is necessary for the training schools for nurses. The duty is apparent. To the nurse is committed the personal care of the sick in every community; she comes into the family; she bears the responsibility and care of the family in the absence of the family physician; she represents him, replaces him, assists him, and supplements his labours by her efficiency and helpfulness. Through her efforts his labours to cure his patients are made effective. If she is imperfectly trained and unable to appreciate the

* An Address delivered before the Training School for Nurses of Lakeside Hospital, Cleveland, 1906.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)