

it may be of some advantage that we should briefly consider this question, both from the professional and from the public standpoint. And we shall have no difficulty in proving that in the former aspect such uneducated teachers are ridiculous, and that in the latter they may be dangerous. The best method of training these ladies, which is at present in vogue, seems to be the following. They attend a certain number of lectures given by a medical man; they read up a certain amount of literature upon the subject; and they pass some sort of an examination with apparent facility, and are then awarded a resplendent certificate. Some of them go for six months or so to a Workhouse Infirmary in order to acquire some elementary information concerning the details of nursing the sick, and they are thereafter accustomed to state that by this meagre training they have "gained great experience." Our readers will recognise Mrs. Betsy Prig in those accents of smug self-satisfaction; and will, with a smile, remember that they themselves, after a year in a first-class training school, were beginning to realise their ignorance. It is, therefore, not surprising that when these ladies of "great experience" go out to instruct "the poor to make the best use of materials at hand in Nursing in their own homes," that they perpetrate the most ridiculous mistakes. We are informed of one such lecturer, that "she was so totally uneducated that she could not speak intelligible English, while the recklessness with which she treated her aspirates was perfectly exasperating. Both she and the Society which sent her out were the laughing-stock of the country side."

The dangerous results which may follow the ignorant teaching of such women are obvious from many of the reports which reach us. A medical man who attended a lecture given by one of these persons was astounded to hear her recommend the working people, who formed her audience, to take laudanum for rheumatic pains. And when he asked her to state the necessary dose she glibly answered, "about a tablespoonful in a cupful of water." Another lecturer impressed upon her hearers that in the Nursing of patients suffering from inflammation of the lungs—which she described as "pleurisy"—the first essential was to keep the feet in hot water; but, in reply to questions, she failed to make it clear how, or why, this system of treatment was to be carried out. A third recommended alarming doses of arnica, internally, for bruises and sprains. She was emphatic in her instructions that the arnica should be taken internally, and was evidently unaware of its therapeutical effects.

The low opinion which has thus been formed of the knowledge possessed by Nursing Lec-

turers has had a very natural result. Discredit has been thrown upon the whole body of such teachers, and as a practical exemplification of the contempt in which they are held, it is sufficient to mention that more than one County Council has sent ladies who proved successful teachers of Cookery for three months to a Poor Law Infirmary, and have thereafter employed them to teach Nursing as well as Cookery. No one will dispute the fact that such examples as those we have given, and which could be multiplied indefinitely, have brought an "infinite amount of discredit both upon Nursing Lecturers and also on the profession to which the said lecturers were assumed to belong."

MISS DEANE has stated a fact which is beyond dispute, "that the best practical Nurse in the world may be one of the worst teachers." But it is equally indisputable that no person who is not practically acquainted with Nursing details can possibly be an accurate, and therefore a useful, teacher of Nursing. For it is manifest that if Nursing instruction is to be of any value to the poorer classes, it must be eminently practical, and be described with that simplicity, and invested with that interest, which are characteristic of expert teaching. Obscurity is the dark coverlet of ignorance, just as lucidity is the transparent veil of knowledge. And as it is in other professions, so in Nursing, the novice may be able to practise the art, but it requires an expert to teach its details successfully. It would not, for example, be contended that the Professor of Anatomy at a medical school, or the Professor of Greek at a University should be persons who had less knowledge of their respective subjects than might be possessed by their respective pupils. But as a matter of fact, many a poor woman has learned by attendance on her children points of practical Nursing which are unmentioned in the text books, and are unknown to those who have had little or no experience in attending the sick. So far as the public are concerned, there is another serious aspect of this question. It is undeniable that to a large extent the public have been deceived in the class of women supplied as Lecturers on Nursing. County Councils and other bodies have asked for trained Nurses to give instruction in the Nursing of the sick; and they have often been sent women, who, as one of our correspondents last week admitted, "are not qualified to nurse." These women are in the habit of wearing the uniform of a Nurse, and yet our correspondent would have us believe that they do not "pretend to be trained Nurses." Under what possible pretence do they wear the outward garb which is meaningless unless it is intended to convey a false impression to those who employ, and to

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)