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Editorial.

THE PROVISION OF CAPABLE TEACHERS.

The leading members of our profession in this and other countries are beginning to recognise that one of the most important factors in future progress is the provision of competent teachers in the nurse-training schools. We are realising increasingly the importance of a Ward Sister's position, and know that if these posts are to be satisfactorily filled the greatest care must be exercised to select the right person. That she is a highly-skilled and competent nurse, though this is the first essential, is not sufficient. She must also be a good administrator, and a methodical manager, but in addition to these qualifications yet another is all-important. It must always be borne in mind, in the appointment of a Ward Sister, that she occupies the position of a teacher in a training-school; that her work is no longer principally to perform nursing duties, but to instruct others in their practical nursing work. A constant succession of probationers passes through her hands, and it is her duty to ensure that they learn the best methods of performing the duties they are called upon to discharge in relation to the sick. An essential qualification, therefore, in a Ward Sister is not only the possession of knowledge, but a power of effectively and systematically imparting that knowledge to others, which is an entirely distinct gift. Hence the fact that excellent nurses do not always make good Ward Sisters.

This gift, undoubtedly, is possessed to a much greater degree by some women than others, and should always be carefully sought for and cherished by the head of a training-school. But, where evidence of its existence is found, how is it to be best developed and cultivated? To this question little attention has so far been generally paid, although in the United States a course in Hospital Economics is now given at Teachers' College, Columbia

University, which has for its purpose the preparation of trained nurses, who have the necessary qualifications, for teachers in training-schools for nurses. We have learnt that the "born nurse" must pass through a prolonged period of professional instruction in order that her natural gifts may be developed. Similarly, the future teacher must be taught how to teach if the best results are to be attained.

It is interesting in this connection to note that Professor Henri E. Armstrong, at the meeting of the British Medical Association held recently at Belfast, urgently pleaded for reforms in almost every department of national education. Critics, he said, abounded, but leaders were few. No attempt was made to discover in any scientific manner what would be really the wise policy to pursue. Those who dared to differ or offer advice were looked at askance and always with jealous eyes, and too often everything was done to block the way to the reformer, not from any base motive, but from sheer inability to appreciate what was proposed.

It was necessary in these days to organise, to put imagination into our affairs, and to be alive to every opportunity. He holds that our Education Department must be re-organised root and branch, imbued with sound ideals, and led to understand its great importance as the head centre of the educational system. The really serious task before those who direct the work of education in the immediate future is, says Professor Armstrong, the choice of a programme, and the provision of capable teachers. If our schools are to be improved the teachers must be trained to teach properly, or rather put in the right way to teach, because practice and experience alone can give proficiency. All these points are as forcibly applicable to the appointment of teachers in training-schools for nurses as in other educational departments, and there is little doubt that they deserve more attention than they have yet received.

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