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Editorial.

A TRAINING-SCHOOL FOR MATRONS.

We print in another column the details of the course of training now established at Munich for Matrons of the "Mother Houses" for training nurses in connection with the Red Cross Society of Germany. In the matter of nursing organisation, on a self-governing basis, Germany has as yet not forged ahead so far either as this country or the United States, the reason no doubt being that the nursing of the sick is for the most part in the hands of Orders of Deaconesses, who, though their work is admirable, count independence of thought and action almost as a sin, and have consequently followed placidly in the course marked out for them without considering their individual responsibility. On the other hand, there are signs that "the old order changeth, giving place to new" in the uprising in Germany of the "Free Sisters," who, finding themselves unsuited for community life, are forming associations on co-operative principles.

Of one thing we have always felt certain—that when German women, with their splendid intellectual abilities and their love of detail, grappled seriously with the organisation of nursing from the professional standpoint, their methods would be wise and thorough. And so it has come to pass that Germany, having realised the necessity of a course of instruction to fit nurses to hold the position of Matron, has already such a course fully organised and in working order, while British nurses are still discussing its desirability.

The essential points of the scheme are that the candidates for training must be of good family and well educated, and must, as a rule, have had two years' experience as Sister. The course includes training in the management of a nursing school, of the household, and in the education and guidance of the Sisters.

In all these points training is essential if the best results are to be secured, and so far no systematic effort has been made in this country to provide such instruction; for eligible candidates—a fact which is widely deplored by some of our most experienced Superintendents. We have heard much of recent years of the necessity for three years' training; and our methods have in the past been so various, and, in many instances, so slack, that only comparatively recently have we attained to any degree of uniformity in regard to a qualification now held by the large majority to be the least which is compatible with efficiency. But have not British nurses been somewhat too apt to plume themselves on the possession of a three years' certificate, and to think that when they have obtained it nothing more is required of them? A Matron of our acquaintance is wont to say, with a smile, of the nurses of a certain school: "If nurses hold the three years' certificate of ———, there is no position in the nursing world which they do not feel capable of filling." While acknowledging the excellence of the training given by this particular school, her own experience led her to believe that there were many departments in which its graduates might usefully add to their knowledge. Confidence is a valuable quality in a nurse, but contentment with present attainments is always to be deplored, and it is certain that, even after considerable experience as a Ward Sister, a trained nurse requires expert tuition in the special duties of a Matron.

So in the United States and in Germany nurses who have felt this need have translated it into practical action by organising schools for Matrons. The value of such schools is undoubted. They act as a sieve, hall-marking those who have passed successfully through the higher course, and thus affording substantial aid to hospital committees in their selection of candidates. The institution of a course of training for Matrons in this country is probably one of our most pressing needs at the present time.

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