In the statement that there is a sad lack of thoroughness in the average woman of to-day I need only refer to training-school statistics to bear me out. From one school in twelve months 1,200 letters of information are sent out, and some 175 formal applications are received. Furthermore, from this number only fifty candidates are selected, and, nevertheless, from this restricted number of women chosen, at least eight or ten are dropped generally for inefficiency and lack of education. If, then, only forty women out of a total of 175 applicants are considered worthy of admission to the school, what is the probable standard of education among the other 135, not to mention the many women who do not make formal application because refusal is certain? Surely the superintendents of training-schools are justified in feeling that the unthinking part of the public would have them "make bricks without straw."

But the fact that the qualifications of these selected few are not, and never have been, considered by superintendents of training-schools of the first order for the making of nurses is being proved rather by deeds than by words, and this dissatisfaction has found its expression in the establishment of a preliminary course of training, which is being tried in varying degrees in schools of this country and Great Britain, and which has been put on a more thorough and comprehensive basis in the Johns Hopkins than elsewhere. This extra course has been made compulsory before a woman can begin her technical training in nursing, in the hope of overcoming to some extent a very general ignorance and helplessness in a branch of knowledge that for century upon century has been supposed to be woman's chief stronghold—that of household economics. As Miss Nutting has said, "In pursuance of the belief that it is essential for the nurse to have a wide and thorough acquaintance with the subjects of foods and dietetics and a full knowledge of the work of the household, with careful training in its various branches, a comparatively large portion of time is devoted to this subject"; and in addition to this special course in household economics some training-schools are even advocating and arranging for a course in general literature and in practice in reading aloud, all subjects outside of the direct work of teaching nursing. No doubt many of you might think that the above statement cannot apply to all classes of women, but as a matter of fact actual experience has amply proved that the woman of wealth, the well-to-do woman, and the college student are equally deficient in manual dexterity, so essential to good nursing, and are as ignorant of the underlying principles of household affairs as is the woman who has never had an opportunity to develop her mental powers and has laboured all her days with her hands. It can be scarcely appreciated how deficient women are in the practical knowledge of the affairs of the house until one is brought face to face with such ignorance in some such place as a training-school for nurses, where it becomes one of the fundamental requirements. As an example, I have had instructors tell me that not one woman in ten upon first entering the diet-school knows how to make a cup of tea properly, few could break an egg deftly enough to separate the yolk from the white, while the qualities of accuracy, precision, and a fine finish are invariably absent. The woman who would be a success as a nurse, or, in fact, in anything, who would possess the quality of thoroughness in its fullest sense, no matter what kind of work she undertakes, needs the combined qualities of a trained mind, capable hands and body—and all must be dominated by the soul. Certainly no form of education can make for thoroughness or can fully fit for the business of life that does not recognise an equal training in this great trinity—mind, body, and soul.

But when and where should a woman receive such a preparation? Surely not during a six months' preliminary course in a training-school for nurses, but rather during the sixteen years preceding the time she is of an age to take up the work she intends to make the chief occupation of her life. To quote the words of another, "The hospital is the place *par excellence* to teach the art of nursing and to practise the science, but it is not the best place, or even a good place, to teach the accessories. Moreover, in assuming the burden of this higher education we are unwisely making ourselves responsible for all the defects and deficiencies in the training of nurses and bearing the criticism against the profession, aimed for the most part not against her nursing education, but the accessories." If, then, this education is to begin with our childhood, where and how should it be given? Naturally, in the school and at home. But, as Miss Nutting has said, "Were it possible to place the requirements of admission at such a point as would ensure in our pupils a definite knowledge of certain prescribed subjects before entrance to the schools of nursing, it is manifest that our work of education might be greatly facilitated." That such a course under present conditions is not practicable is only too evident. Any scheme for such preparatory instruction should include, first, a thorough practical training in the care of the household and a knowledge of the properties of foods. Now at present there exists no school of instruction where a candidate could go to prepare herself fitly in these subjects for entrance to the hospital school for nursing. To be sure, the Drexel Institute in Philadelphia, the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, the School of Housekeeping in Boston, and some others cover the ground of the domestic sciences admirably, and upon them we draw for our instructors in these branches. But the instruction in these institutions is largely occupied with the

previous page next page