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Editorial.

THE PRICELESSNESS OF MENTAL SUPREMACY.

"Teach or preach or labour as you will, everlasting difference is set between one person's capacity and another's."

At the Annual Meeting of the Victorian Trained Nurses' Association, which we recently reported, its Hon. Secretary, Miss Brayshay, in the course of an admirable speech, quoted the above words, which are so important that no apology is needed for laying additional emphasis upon them.

To all those whose duty it is to select candidates for certain posts, whether, in the case of our own profession, as probationers, Sisters, or Matrons and Superintendents, they are of the first moment, for on her capacity depends how much the probationer will profit by her training, whether the Sister will manage her ward well or ill, whether the Matron will train nurses who will be efficient in their work, generous-minded women, patriotic citizens, or whether she turns out graduates of merely mediocre attainments. The duty entrusted to a Matron of selecting candidates for various posts is thus a most responsible one, for on her perception of latent capacity the calibre of the whole school and its offshoots depends. Appearance, it is true, must and should count for something, but appearance alone affords a very unsafe guide. "Let us elect the best-looking girl," said a member of a Board of Guardians recently in relation to the applications of three candidates for a post, and we all recognise the fallaciousness of the test; we must look below the surface, or we may miss the best candidate. But do all Matrons realise the supreme importance of discovering brain power, and of placing a high value on it when they have done so? Do they not even sometimes avoid the woman of mental ability, from a feeling that the one with less capacity and indi-

viduality is more plastic? True, it is easier to model a figure in clay than to sculpture it out of marble, but is there any comparison in the results attained when the work is complete? Marble, it may further be urged, is rare, while clay is cheap; some may ask, should we not be content with the latter, which is easily procurable and sufficiently serviceable? But the true artist grudges the time spent on inferior material, and is never content with less than the best. This secured, he will lavish his best skill upon it, knowing that he will be repaid by results.

It is the same all the world over. Use inferior material, and you must of necessity turn out an inferior article. Accept as a probationer a girl of inferior mental capacity, and you will never make her a first-class nurse. It is essential, therefore, that we bend all our energies to discovering, obtaining, and, when obtained, prizing, as probationers girls of mental ability; then when the treasures of opportunity, of skilled teaching, of experience are expended upon them, these will be absorbed and utilised to the best advantage. The difference between the average nurse, selected without much thought being expended on her brain power, and the one carefully chosen because she has shown evidence of its possession, will be "just the everlasting difference that is set between one person's capacity and another's." Let us never forget that "this God-given supremacy is priceless, just as rare in the world at one time as another. What you can manufacture or communicate you can lower the price of, but this mental supremacy is incommunicable; you will never multiply its quantity or lower its price, and the best thing we can do is to set ourselves, not to the attainment, but to the discovery of this. Learning to know gold when we see it from iron, glass and diamonds from flint and sand, is for most of us a more profitable employment than trying to make diamonds out of our own charcoal."

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