

performance of her duties. I have heard, and read, of painstaking stupidity and blundering good will, but in my experience no one who is capable of taking pains remains noticeably stupid, and those possessed of genuine good will always end by finding suitable expression for it.

Another point with regard to technical training that the Superintendent has to consider is: Am I to tell my pupils just as much as they can thoroughly assimilate in six months, or, knowing well that mine is probably the last direct and systematic teaching they will receive, ought I to give them an introduction to more difficult and advanced branches of their work?

The best teachers are not those who can impart, or even imprint, the largest amount of cut-and-dried information in a given space of time, but those who can convey to their pupils some conception of the vast fields of knowledge that lie before mankind and inspire them with the desire to make at least some corner of them their own. Superficiality is often made too much of a bugbear; to have some idea of how much there is to be known is far more provocative of humility than self-conceit. And there is always the irreducible minimum of hard-and-fast science and strict nursing routine as a firm centre to all the probationers' studies. Better for many a pupil to be let flounder helplessly in a classic folio until she feels her own ignorance, instead of encasing her mind stiffly in notes from a selection of an abstract of a primer.

When training has done its best, there will always be characters marred by a tendency to carelessness and easy self-satisfaction, and a Superintendent will naturally hesitate to entrust pupils of this type with any knowledge that will increase their possibilities for displaying these failings injuriously. There will be other district probationers, perhaps slower of apprehension, but so thoroughly conscientious, and with such a high ideal of their duty, that teachers will fearlessly introduce them to subjects that it is impossible for them to master during their brief period of formal training, confident that the faint outlines traced will be filled in accurately later on.

The Superintendent should spare some time and thought for the general mental development of her probationers, knowing how greatly it will add to their happiness and usefulness in the world. She must not be too ready to think that, because a woman of six- or eight-and-twenty has never yet taken a rational interest in public affairs, has never yet read any of the masterpieces of poets, essayists, historians, or novelists, never yet looked at a landscape with a seeing eye, that she is doomed to remain in that state of poverty and dearth for the natural term of her life. There is too much nonsense talked on the lines of "Old dogs learn no new tricks," a doubtfully true statement even in its narrowest and most literal application.

Apathy with regard to all intellectual matters in the least apart from the needs of daily life is often owing entirely to deadening companionship or overstrain of some faculty of mind or body; and, placed in different and more stimulating surroundings, the fully-matured woman will often show considerable mental growth and unfolding.

(To be continued.)

Legal Matters.

NURSES AND NOTICE.

An interesting case, more especially to nurses employed by private nursing institutions, was heard and decided last week in the Brighton County Court, when Miss Fanny Chartres, of Maldon, Essex, sued Miss Mary Elizabeth Bootles, of 95, Western Road, Brighton, and Superintendent of the London and Brighton Association of Nurses, to recover £46. 6s. 10d. damages for wrongful dismissal.

THE PLAINTIFF'S CASE.

The plaintiff said she was engaged for the Association by the defendant, and a copy of the rules sent to her. On June 19th she went out at 2 p.m. and returned at 8 p.m., she then being the last for duty. On her return she was told she had lost the defendant a case, and that she was furious about it; She saw the defendant that night, and was told that she ought not to be away more than an hour at a time without permission. At the end of the interview the plaintiff tendered her resignation, but the defendant refused to accept it, saying she had better leave at once. The reason assigned was that she had been out more than an hour, and that she had sent in her resignation. She was paid £8 15s. 8d.—viz., a quarter's salary. She had been unable to get work since, owing to having been summarily dismissed without a testimonial.

THE DEFENCE.

Miss Bootles said she had never abrogated the rule as to nurses not being absent more than an hour without permission. The plaintiff was told that she must take her place as next nurse out, but, nevertheless, she absented herself for six hours. She subsequently resigned, and was told she had better go at once. She refused, but later came for her money, and said she was determined to go. No nurse had leave to be out for more than an hour. They were required to report every hour.

The Judge directed the jury that the plaintiff was not entitled to damages for the injury alleged to her character; all she was entitled to was a month's wages. Her counsel having objected to this ruling on a point of law, the jury found for the plaintiff for a month's wages, and judgment was entered for this amount with costs.—Our readers will notice that the judge did not award the plaintiff a quarter's salary, but a month's wages in lieu of notice, the present position of a nurse before the law being evidently that of a domestic servant.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)