

five great subjects forms the major part of the whole course of instruction, and should consist of systematic and continuous bedside teaching, which may be carried on by instructors especially prepared and provided for that purpose. Nothing can take the place of this kind of instruction, and the whole function of lectures, classes, demonstrations is merely preparatory or supplementary. The main body of teaching should always be at the bedside, and that should be done in a far more thorough and comprehensive way than is now generally the case. It may be the province of the Assistant to the Superintendent, or of the Head Nurse of the Ward, or of special instructors. In those hospitals where the service is very acute and active, or where a medical school is attached, it is often impossible for either Head Nurses or Assistants to give such teaching, and an instructor provided for the purpose carries the work forward systematically and to better advantage.

It has been customary in training-schools to place the pupils at once on duty in the hospital wards. Here it was expected that they should perform the simple duties of bed-making, dusting, cleaning, &c., to advance them to the more responsible duties concerning patients at the very earliest possible moment—to utilise them, in fact, for the needs of the hospital work as rapidly as their apparent progress made it safe to do so. I say apparent progress, because real progress is not possible where pupils are forced rapidly along to the performance of acts which they do not understand; the valuable opportunities for instruction such acts should afford are almost wholly lost to them when they have not been in some way prepared by previous instruction. It is true of nursing schools, as of other professional schools, that to be of the greatest value to the students the course of study should be preceded by carefully-planned instruction in subjects which are strictly fundamental. The subjects which may be clearly recognised as such here are anatomy and physiology, household economics (which represent a study of foods and their preparation, hygiene, and sanitation), materia medica, and the elements of nursing.

A pupil who enters the hospital wards prepared by a thorough teaching in these subjects within certain naturally defined limits brings at once intelligence to bear upon the processes of her work. She can understand what she sees and handles, and can profit by matters which without such teaching would pass by unnoticed. Preparatory training of some such nature as is outlined above has been planned as a matter of experiment in certain directions for the past few years, and definitely established as a part of the course of instruction in several leading hospitals both in England and America.

It varies as greatly in length and in the handling of its subjects as the general training of nurses varies, and nothing under the name of education

exhibits a more interesting and manifold variety of standards than the latter.

Such preparatory courses may cover a period of six weeks, three months, six months, or even one year. They may include the subjects named on a previous page, or the whole instruction for the three years may be crowded into three months. They are in some instances so arranged that the instruction is carried on largely in the wards, in others in certain departments outside of the wards, and, again, in technical schools having no relation whatever to the hospital.

Still further, they may be established in a separate building, belonging perhaps to the hospital, provided and equipped for use as a preparatory department. This method is immeasurably superior to any other, and may be considered an ideal way of maintaining such a course of study. What is of interest and value to us is the growing recognition of the fact that some such preparatory instruction is necessary, and the rapidly increasing number of attempts which are being made under many difficulties to provide it. Whatever form this instruction may ultimately take, it may now be reasonably looked upon as a necessary part of a good education in nursing. It should include a prescribed course of study and practical work, of which a suggested outline is presented. The subjects presented should be—

Household Science.
Anatomy and Physiology.
Materia Medica.
Elements of Nursing.

The practical work should occupy about six hours daily, which will leave three to four hours for theoretical instruction in subjects which it will be observed have hitherto occupied largely the time devoted to theory during the entire junior year.

HOUSEHOLD ECONOMICS.

In household economics the various subjects must be handled and taught in a large degree practically. Some department of the hospital where the work desired as a means of instruction is carried on daily may be chosen, and pupils may be detailed for duty there under an instructor precisely as in a hospital ward.

The Nurses' Home, under some circumstances, forms a good field for this teaching, especially in handling the subject of foods and their preparation, providing, as it does, two breakfasts, two dinners, and two suppers. The private wards, if such exist, or even a general hospital kitchen, may be utilised for the study of foods and their nutritive values, their cost and care, and their use and preparation for various forms of disease. In the same way may be taught the principles and methods of ventilation and heating, of plumbing and drainage, and other matters which, under the general term of hygiene, relate to the care and maintenance of a healthful household.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)