

Some Results of Preparatory Instruction.*

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Having presented the main facts connected with this work so far as its growth, conditions, and methods are concerned, the question of its effects upon the schools and hospitals naturally follows. It probably has not taken any one of those who have introduced this method into their schools long to realise that they are grappling with rather a large problem, that the machinery and means of the average hospital do not readily adjust themselves to radical changes of method. It is the most unanimous opinion that there is an increase of expense, and in all instances a very considerable increase in work and responsibility. The expense is, first, that of maintaining a group of students for three, four, or six months in addition to the number required to carry on the actual work of the hospital. The larger the school the greater the expense. If the preparatory term is of six months' duration, and the course is three years, precisely one sixth of the entire school is always under training and instruction in the preparatory department, and the total number of students must be increased accordingly. The next expense is that of instruction and supervision. This group of students form a class by themselves, and are, and require to be, under the routine supervision and teaching of one or more persons, according to the number of students and the plan of work carried out in the course. The instruction being in most instances in subjects which were already included in the general course, though given at a much later period and perhaps in a different way, it probably does not add appreciably to the expense. The actual expense depends greatly upon how and where this instruction is carried on. If, as in England, a separate building is provided and maintained only for the purpose of receiving and instructing probationers, there is a definite cost which it is easy to estimate. Tragedar House, the Preliminary Department of the London Hospital Training-School, where twenty-seven probationers are always being prepared for the hospital, costs just £1,000 a year to keep up. If such instruction is given in technical schools, while the pupils board and lodge in the hospital, there is the cost of maintenance for the hospital, while that of instruction is met by the technical school. If the practical part of the preparatory instruction is carried on in departments other than the wards, in which the students can perform under instruction some portion of the work which must be done daily, the expense may be to a considerable extent lessened.

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If the teaching of cookery and dietetics can be done either in the kitchens of nurses' homes or of private wards, if the making and sterilising of surgical dressings and handling of surgical supplies can be taught in the surgical supply room or in any department where such work is concentrated, if the care, cost, and distribution of linen and clothing and domestic supplies can be taught in the linen rooms, a certain number of salaried workers can undoubtedly be released in these departments, but it must be borne in mind that in all places, under all circumstances where teaching is properly done, there must be a larger number of students than would be necessary simply to do the actual work. The students' hours of practical duty are also much shorter than those of a salaried worker in such departments. On the other hand, it is claimed that students working under expert supervision in such departments are much more economical in the use of materials, and that a considerable saving is effected thereby. Economy is made generally a strong feature of the teaching, and it is known that the cost per capita for food has been lessened in a marked way when its preparation has been placed in the hands of students.

All things considered, there seems to be little reason to doubt that the establishment of preparatory courses of instruction within the hospital, but outside of the wards, does mean a definite increase in expense varying with the work of different institutions and the manner in which the instruction is carried on. The idea that it shall cost anybody anything to give nurses a proper education has been for so many years unthinkable that we cannot wonder if it stands for some time in the way of better development for training-school work. It is not so many years since in most hospitals the entire teaching of all classes as well as the really great executive work of such institutions was placed upon the shoulders of one woman. The idea that a regular, definite system of instruction had any place in a training-school for nurses has taken form and substance quite within the memory of the youngest member present. As for paying for lectures when they can be had for nothing—perish the thought! So I think we need not shiver on the brink unduly, but make the plunge and say, "Yes, the education of nurses if properly done *does* cost, and it should." All good education anywhere costs, and it is a bad day for our schools, for our nurses, for physicians, and for sick people everywhere, when the first question is always, "How little can we do it for?" rather than, "How well can we do it?" In a medical school which comes under my observation, where the students number less than 300, their instruction is carried on by a staff of over eighty professors, associate professors, clinical professors, assistants, and instructors, and the services which have been rendered in instruction by about fifteen other

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