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Editorial.

MEDICAL STUDENTS AS NURSES.

In all the addresses given by eminent medical men to students at the re-opening of the medical schools, there is singularly little mention of trained nursing with which students must necessarily be brought much in contact. At St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, however, reference was made to the subject by Professor Osler, who said that in our hospitals at the present day nurses were allowed to do things which students might do, and the students thus failed to learn an important branch of their profession. There was no question about the nurses doing them much better, but he should like to see a hospital started in which medical students acted as nurses.

At the present day the work of trained nurses is an important and integral part of the work of the medical profession, to which it is quite indispensable. But we have frequently insisted in this Journal that there is a point in the training of students and nurses where the instruction given to both should be for a time the same, and then the paths of the two diverge. The work of the student to be directed along the exact and scientific lines which will fit him to enter the profession of medicine, as qualified to direct the maintenance of health, and the treatment of disease, while the nurse enters upon a course of training which enables her to become an adept in the practical care of the sick and in carrying out the treatment prescribed for their cure or relief by the physician and surgeon.

There is no doubt that if the student knows nothing of the work of the nurse he is at a great disadvantage when qualified; but it is work which demands years of training, and the devotion of the working years of a lifetime to become thoroughly expert in, the student of medicine can only therefore hope for an insight into the principles and practice of the

nursing art. This insight the student has a right to expect should be provided for him in the curriculum of his studies. Some tentative experiments have been made in this direction in more than one of our large hospitals where the Sisters teach the students certain practical nursing details, but the teaching of the principles of nursing to medical students is a matter which needs consideration and systematising.

When nurses have their College of Nursing, affiliated perhaps as a teaching centre to the University of London, it will be easy to arrange that certain courses shall be open to medical students, and there is no doubt that the teaching power would be best centralised, and instruction most efficiently and economically imparted in this way. We know no reason, unless it be prejudice, why those responsible for medical education should not at once arrange such a course for students, or why, as an alternative, the Matron or an experienced Sister, nominated by her in each of the hospitals with medical schools, should not be invited to give a nursing course to the students, although there would be waste of teaching power in such a plan as compared with a central method. One thing, however, is certain—when and wherever the teaching of nursing to students is arranged, that teaching, if it is to be of use, must be given by trained nurses.

In connection with the hospital which Dr. Osler advocates shall be nursed by medical students, we wonder what is the length of the nursing curriculum he proposes. The President of the College of Physicians, in addressing the students of University College Hospital last week, insisted that not more than two years out of a five years' course should be devoted to all the intermediate subjects which are already numerous. We presume that it was quite in the Professor's mind in connection with this hospital that the victims should be of the male sex.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)