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THE HOUSEKEEPER'S DEPARTMENT AS A SPHERE FOR SPECIALISATION.

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Much has been written lately on the subject of what should or should not be included in the curriculum of a training school for nurses, in order that the instruction given in all branches shall be productive of the best possible results, and that the nurses may be fully equipped for appointments for which they may compete in the future. The career of a nurse should always receive a certain amount of consideration both from herself and those responsible for her training, so that the ever-widening scope for her abilities may be duly recognised and provided for.

Many of our leading hospital schools have, in recent years, given to suitable nurses, during the last year of training, a three months' course of work and instruction in the pathological laboratories or in some other department, not directly connected with nursing work, thereby stimulating an interest in some special branch of work which may prove of incalculable value to the nurse in the future. To the nurse who possesses a faculty for organisation perhaps the least help is given. She will probably become a ward sister and reach her zenith in training probationers, and perhaps she, more than anyone else, will influence the ideals and attainments of those who pass through her ward. All of us cherish memories of some Sister, all honour to her, who by her sweetness enabled us to retain our early ideals, and whose sterner qualities helped to develop an appreciation of the value of efficiency, method, and discipline. But what of the Sister herself? One hears much of the inadequacy of the remuneration paid to a Sister of a hospital ward, and the impossibility of providing for old age or a premature breakdown while "passing rich" on a salary of £40 a year. Be she the most devoted and altruistic of Sisters, it is still prob-

able that she must consider her financial position, and very often she is forced to the decision that she must seek another and a better post, and the one she is most likely to aspire to is a matronship. It is on arriving at this conclusion that she begins to realise her limitations, and there is perhaps no subject upon which she is so profoundly ignorant as hospital housekeeping and the management and training of a domestic staff. Yet to all who desire to attain to the higher posts in the profession such knowledge and experience is indispensable. How is the difficulty to be met and overcome? There are several hospitals in London where pupil housekeepers are received for a course of three or four months' training, but their number could be counted on the fingers of one hand, and the majority take only one pupil at a time. Yet where could one expect to learn better the administrative work of a hospital than in the administrative department itself? Why, therefore, should nurses not be allowed to have a certain amount of training there? It would tend to enlarge the scope of the profession, and would open up many administrative appointments, quite outside the hospitals, to nurses.

For the first week or two in the new department the nurse would probably do little more than weigh and give out stores, copy menus, and record tradesmen's deliveries. This, with all the bookkeeping involved, and the work of issuing from different departments foodstuffs, surgical stores, hardware, cleaning materials, &c., would be as much as she would grasp thoroughly at first. Later she could take a part in the management of servants, and success in this direction is sometimes only gained after long striving and many mistakes. Often it requires almost superhuman tact in these days to ensure the smooth working of the domestic machinery, and yet the most troublesome maid will often work the best when rightly handled, for it is frequently the one who has most character, energy, and latent possibility of better things who is the most hard to manage.

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