

experts. At present the rule is to entrust the teaching of nursing to anyone but the person who is qualified to nurse; public bodies seem to consider that, for the side of nursing concerned with manual work, the nurses are most useful, but when it comes to the great work of teaching, where the faculty of intellect comes into the reckoning, the tendency is to appoint members of the Voluntary Aid Detachments who have not the best knowledge for the work, or the medical women who have knowledge and training of quite a different kind to that likely to prove useful to women in general.

#### LOST OPPORTUNITIES.

We hear very many complaints on the unfairness of this, but a little clear thinking is bound to lead to the admission that the nurses have not troubled to qualify themselves for the work of teaching and that many most efficient nurses have been content to let opportunity slip by from sheer lack of courage. We know of the case of a young nurse, just out of hospital, who, in a nursing home, heard a senior nurse remark to another, "Now, that is what I'd like to do, but, of course, I never could." The first nurse turned from the sink where she was working with the question, "What is it?" and was shown an advertisement for a nurse lecturer for First Aid. As such, this subject had not been taught in the hospital where she trained, but a knowledge of anatomy and general nursing made it possible to learn it quickly and her application was with the advertisers next morning. She was the only applicant, in spite of the fact that the salary offered was a very good one and the result was that, following on the first course of lectures, she lectured for many very important bodies, and was continually refusing engagements.

Now it is very easy for trained nurses to adopt the "never could" attitude, which causes them to lose a great deal of interesting and satisfying work in the field of public speaking. Many County Councils, Women's Institutes, and other bodies undertaking educational and social work in the United Kingdom, are constantly inaugurating schemes for the teaching of Home Nursing, First Aid, the Care of Women and Children in the Home, and Infant Welfare. Many thousands of lectures are given annually on such subjects and yet the number of nurses employed in teaching them probably does not exceed twenty; yet there is no doubt that here is a splendid opening not only for the nurses to secure good appointments for themselves, but to raise very greatly the status of the nursing services in the public eye. But they need not sit and wait for lectureships to come to them; they must be on the look out for them, under present circumstances, and they must make a greater effort to qualify for the work. We greatly hope that the advent of Sister-Tutors will give an impulse towards increasing very considerably the number of those who become lecturers on Nursing and Health subjects.

#### THE FIRST QUALIFICATION.

The first qualification required is, of course, a complete knowledge of the subjects one is called upon to teach. Indeed, before one goes to a platform, it is essential to know at least about three times as much as one is to be called upon to teach, and, with all due respect to the hospitals, they have failed to understand, to the full extent, what may be demanded of nurses when they pass outside the gates. This is one reason why the G.N.C. Syllabus should, as indicated in the Act, be made compulsory and not merely advisory; it will provide sure foundations for nurses to build upon if they have professional ambition or wish to specialise in some branch, and it will ensure against a purely promiscuous system of teaching which so often leads to a confused collection of knowledge, worse almost than none at all when it comes to getting matter into shape

to put before an audience. We hope that more and more the hospitals will realise that there is a real need for nurses qualified by special training to go out and teach to women and girls subjects it is so essential they should know.

It is a curious thing that nursing appears to be the only subject educational authorities allow to be taught without the possession of a proper qualification on the part of the teacher, and this, if one considers the matter, is a most serious reflection on the educational standards of general nursing education. That others than nurses should undertake the teaching of nursing is due to the fact that the hospitals have made little effort to qualify nurses as teachers of nursing, and also there has been no effort on the part of the nurses themselves to capture the lectureships.

Yet, if hard and at first difficult, it is work full of wonderful possibilities. It is to be admitted that all have not those natural gifts which help to make a good lecturer or teacher; but it is not always the clever people who accomplish most, and very often those who acquire their knowledge with the greatest effort are better able to understand and deal with the difficulties that beset the average mind in absorbing fresh knowledge. As to the complaint that few nurses possess any faculty for public speaking, we have only to remember the early efforts of the great Disraeli in order to find encouragement. Those who intend, however, to take up the work of lecturing should take, at the start, some lessons in public speaking, otherwise they will readily fall into bad habits which will handicap them very seriously.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF A KNOWLEDGE OF PSYCHOLOGY.

One very important branch of study for those who aspire to become lecturers in nursing is a knowledge of psychology; this will help them not merely to manage an audience but, what is more important still, so to understand and train their own minds that they are able to marshal all their information when they rise to meet large audiences. It will engender too that sympathy and understanding which will keep the lecturer *en rapport* with her audience even when the subject of the lecture may, of necessity, be more or less uninteresting. Then there is that wonderful possession a sense of humour. It saves the situation many times by relieving for a moment the long effort at concentration required for the lengthy lectures demanded by certain authorities. A quaint story or a practical demonstration, introduced when the attention begins to flag, will often turn a lecture that might have been a failure into a complete success if one seizes the psychological moment to introduce it. Mothers and girls attending evening lectures after a long day's work are not capable of concentrating for long, however great their enthusiasm for acquiring a knowledge of nursing or the methods used to preserve health.

A fatal mistake on the part of many young speakers is that of committing their lectures to paper; nothing is more likely to stultify their efforts to become good public speakers. It is argued that such preparation is found more reliable when the time comes to mount the platform, but a person who depends on written lectures will never hold her audience for long. A much better plan is to think out her subject well, to concentrate on the headings she has chosen for the different sections of the lecture, and then, in time, she will acquire not merely an easy command of language, but something more valuable still, which can be no better described than by quoting the lines of Tennyson:—

"And thought leapt out to wed with thought,  
Ere thought could wed itself with speech."

ISABEL MACDONALD,

Secretary to the Corporation.

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