

That a preparatory section preceding the preliminary one should be provided; that this section—comprising one or two sections according to the age and mental development of the candidates—should be organised systematically and conducted efficiently.

In Belgium there are those who would like to promulgate a statute signifying that this preparatory section should not encumber the Schools for Nurses and should be left in the hands of institutions of higher or professional instruction.

We recommend also the construction in the country of a few centres of local preparatory sections, each one of which should be annexed to a School for Nurses, which is not wholly absorbed by nursing, situated in vast open spaces.

We can at once visualise the many advantages of such a centralisation—a moral and intellectual level more unified, capacity of assimilating more easily scientific ideas, therefore suppression of the insipid and dubious, medical clearing up of the preliminary, generalised development of the spirit of method, of manual skill, of natural gifts, and of the formation of character; from thence a judicious and easy selection before the definite acceptance into the section of nurses.

But our ambition does not stop there.

In the exercise of her mission, we demand of the nurse that she intervene more directly in the work of the housewife so that she may induce the latter to conquer her indolence or her ignorance and may help her to construct a home harmonious, hygienic and healthy.

I fear, however, that the ideas of domestic economy imposed in the curriculum, which the nurse probationer practises but fragmentarily during her three years of study, give her neither the competence nor the authority capable of imposing herself on mothers of families. A new form of social worker is called for to supplement the activities of the Nurse, a "family aid."

The preparatory pupil—broken in by a methodical and progressive training to do all the duties—is peculiarly fitted to exercise these duties in the guise of household apprenticeship under the supervision of the nurse.

These girls are full of life, of energy, of imagination; they need a field of action where they have the feeling of doing useful work.

II.

I hope I have been able in the preceding account to persuade you of the opportuneness of a preparatory section scientifically organised.

Let us now pass to the study of the curriculum.

The plan which I have the honour of proposing to you has been followed for nearly two years in our small provincial school.

Other attempts formerly made had led us to the same conclusion.

Curriculum.—(1) General course of revision and progress; (2) theoretical and practical instruction in the science of family life based upon sciences physical and chemical, economic, moral and social; (3) development of all capacities, manual, mechanical and artistic; (4) specific professional preparation; and (5) practical probationary periods.

Development.—(1) Increased revision in the courses of study at the end of the secondary school stage. Some idea of public and personal hygiene. Visits to industrial establishments. Research in libraries of necessary documents; summaries and reports as means of expression and demonstration. Natural science. The study of a second language. All this teaching conducted broadly in the Socratic manner will cause the pupils to have firmly built ideas; it will permit the teachers to eliminate deliberately and without haste those elements incapable of assimilating the material normally.

(2) But to fix the pupil to the school bench must be strictly avoided. Certainly practical work cannot be efficient unless it is based on scientific theory. It is the laws of physics and biological chemistry which will prove to the nurse of the future that there is a housewifery technique as well as there is a nursing technique, and that it is logical that the second should be preceded by the first. It is also in the form of groups for discussion, presided over by a teacher, that we seek with them the most authentic way of practising in everyday life the moral laws. But the latter must find their expression in simple formulæ based upon elementary ideas of psychology.

III.

Conclusions.

The preparatory section, thanks to its curriculum broadly conceived under a form progressive, active, and humane, tends to create strong personalities, well-balanced, serene, and robust in health.

The pupils will have a solid foundation on which the teachers will build with ease their professional instruction.

The intellectual, spiritual and moral maturity acquired during this transition period forms characters amongst which it will be easy for the educators to form a selection.

The housewifery training develops the girl harmoniously and renders her fit for all family responsibilities.

The pupil who does not display either the fundamental qualities or the aptitude of a good nurse will leave the institution with a preparation sufficient to make of her a useful woman and to become—eventually—a valuable household assistant.

The nurse who has had her beginnings in a preparatory section thus comprised, will display a constant care for economy in the work entrusted to her, and will be capable of ensuring the intelligent management of it. She will be capable of being at once an instructor of hygiene, of nursing, of education, of housekeeping in any circle to which her task will call her.

The pecuniary charges of this section will be in great part compensated for by the effective yield of the pupils and by the almost complete suppression of future elimination.

But the moral advantages which it would ensure to schools for nurses, to charitable works, to administrations, to the nation, are incalculable.

A woman's life, directed from her awakening towards an ideal, definite, tangible and in conformity with her aspirations, sustained and fortified by all that a sane environment creates around her, receives an irresistible impulse. A generous breath stimulates for ever her latent force and the future opens before her full of enthusiasm because she has understood that it needs the open-handed gift of all her strength and of the best that is in her.

ECHOES OF THE CONGRESS.

PRECIOUS BALM.

FAYETTEVILLE, U.S.A.

DEAR AND WONDERFUL DYNAMOS,—As I read the accounts of the Congress in the B.J.N. and the A.J.N., my amaze, admiration, astonishment, pride and joy grew with every word, and really if I didn't know it was so I would declare that it was an impossibility and couldn't be true! Such a procession of brilliant and sumptuous events, lordly, municipally, hospitably, Parliamentary, Princessly and *Royally*—never was heard or imagined. I seemed to be reading of another world, for just as I came to the Princess Royal about to speak in opening the Congress our good cook came to me and announced "The butcher and the man with vegetables are here!"

Such is the prosaic detail of my present existence. Honestly, how you both have the energy I can't com-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)