

Life, Profession and School

By F. CLARKE, Professor of Education, McGill University, Montreal, Que.

An old friend of mine once wrote a very able book to which he gave a title wherein the word "Evolution" was used. When it was suggested to him that the book itself had very little to say about any "Evolution" his reply was: "Yes, I know, but the publishers had the title they wanted, and I had a title under which I could say what I wanted."

So much for titles. I am afraid I must offer the same kind of excuse for the title I have chosen for this paper. It is just a wide-open umbrella under which I can find room for what I wish to say.

Stated in general terms the task I am attempting is one of a perspective sketch. I wish to look at our problem of the education of nurses from the outside, as it were, so as to view it in its setting of current thought and practice, both in education and in the wider field of social and cultural tendency.

A venturesome undertaking, to be sure. For the world of thought and action and cultural movement amid which our problem is to be seen seems to grow increasingly chaotic. It is a world where, to use an Irishism, only the strong heads can keep their feet. Fortunately, our topic itself helps us. I know very little even yet about the problems of nursing education, and most of what I do know has been learned in Canada. But, coming fresh

to some study of the question, I have formed at least one overwhelmingly strong impression. It is this: that no question of modern education can be more *typical*, more *representative*, of all the major issues than that of the education of nurses. Those who wish to clarify their thinking among the tangled threads of education today could find no better specific for their purpose than a study such as we are pursuing here. For it raises, and raises inevitably, all the major issues. That in itself is quite sufficient justification for the very comprehensive report which the Survey has arrived at under the far-seeing guidance of Professor Weir. In Socratic fashion he has followed the argument wherever it leads, and he has found, as all honest students must find, that it leads not only into every department of our educational thought and practice, but into the very roots of our common culture and into the fundamentals of our social structure. Truly, we are engaged on no small undertaking.

Let me illustrate the point by mentioning a few of the issues that arise. To begin with, we are concerned, in the function of nursing, with an indispensable social necessity. Done well or done badly, the job must be *done*, and the loss is immediate if it is not well done. Here at once we have both an urgent question of vocational education and a great issue in