organised, and developed, so that a well-understood minimum of skilled attention shall be ensured to every sick person. This end, which of course can only be obtained by systematic training of the individual up to a certain standard, is in accordance with that general tendency of modern times, which seeks to ensure a recognised minimum of knowledge and skill in everyone following a calling requiring special knowledge and technical skill.

Nothing could have been more fortunate for Nursing in Anglo-Saxon countries than that at the very time when the public was beginning to demand better nursing for the sick, and educated women were eager for some fresh career, Miss Nightingale appeared and popularised the idea of Nurse training on thoroughly scientific and practical grounds, which appealed to our

English common sense.

Of course there were flaws in her systemthere never has been a flawless system-but the great point was that she did not suggest that nursing should be undertaken as an act of religious enthusiasm, as an act of self-denial, as a penance, or, in fact, for any subjective reason whatever. Such a call would have appealed only to a section of the community; but she called upon English women to nurse, because the sick wanted nursing and women wanted work, whilst it was, above all, the fact that she insisted upon the necessity of training Probationers mentally, morally, and physically, before they were fit to be the qualified assistants of the medical profession, that raised nursing to the rank of skilled labour, and attracted hundreds who would never otherwise have given their

Many of her ideas—her views on training were naturally taken from the Deaconesses' Home, at Kaiserswerth; but in eliminating the Deaconess she left the trained Nurse, and virtually founded the modern profession of secular Nursing. There have been many other pioneers who have done as good individual work in the Nursing field as Florence Nightingale, but none who grasped the situation more clearly at a more fortunate moment, or with more far-reaching results. She first popularised the training of Nurses, and with the aid of the nation's money was able to try her experiment on a scale that admitted of its being watched by all, with what results we know.

It is not much more than thirty-five years since the Nightingale Training School was founded, and now there is no Hospital or Infirmary in England of any size that does not train, or pretend to train, Probationers in some sort of way, and there is no doubt but that in the last thirty-five years a complete revolution has taken place in the management and nursing

of Hospitals and Infirmaries immensely to their improvement, mainly as a result of that experiment.

It has been my privilege to watch the growth of a better and more finished system of Nursing in more than one Institution, and I can honestly say that, though the high character and standing of the medical men attached, left no doubt but that the medical treatment was equally good all along, there was no comparison as to the greater comfort and happiness of the patients, the amount of care they received, and the greater thoroughness with which the doctor's orders were carried out before and after the development of the more modern system of The whole system is more in har-Nursing. mony with modern medicine and surgery.

There has been a certain amount of correspondence lately in medical papers in which the attempt has been made by some medical men to undervalue the importance of modern Nursing. Individual instances of failure are cited as a proof of the failure of a system, and sweeping assertions made to the effect that the training of Nurses interfered with that of medical students; that Probationers were far too great an expense to Hospitals, and private Nurses to the public, and generally advocating a retrograde movement in Nursing. But water does not flow backwards.

Looking at the matter without prejudice or favour, it seems to me that the development of any particular profession or calling is simply a matter of supply and demand; no artificial means will hinder it from developing any more than a new trade route or a commercial enterprise can be stopped by sentiment or personal feeling. Nothing in the world is so strong as a public that knows what it wants, and in the case of trained Nurses the public does know what it wants, and now that it has once seen its way to obtaining it, all the King's horses and

all the King's men will not stop it.

And there is no doubt but that in the trained Nurse, the common sense of the public sees an article that meets a long felt need; some one who is qualified in the doctor's absence to give to the sick skilled attention, and to carry out his orders with judgment and knowledge. She may not be perfect, but she makes towards perfection, and many of the faults that have been more particularly credited to a modern trained Nurse are those that are common to a transition period, and will die out when she fully realises that self-restraint, modesty, and a sense of mutual obligation are an integral part of true professional conduct. And as long as Nurses, highly trained and disciplined, and with a thoroughly sound professional education, are demanded by the public, so long it will be the duty of those previous page next page