

Our Foreign Letter.

PRINCE ALFRED HOSPITAL, SYDNEY.

TWENTY years ago, when Prince Alfred, now the Duke of Saxe-Coburg Gotha, visited Sydney, an attempt was made on his life by a maniac. The result was one by no means anticipated by the would-be assassin, for, as the outcome of the colonists' gratitude for their royal guest's escape, and a protest against the attempted crime, a stately and beautiful hospital was built in memory of the event.

Built originally on the outskirts of the city, the population has gradually flowed up to and around it, until to-day it is in the centre of a largely-populated district. This, however, the wisdom of the founders had foreseen, and, in consequence, guarded against, with the result that while having the leading thoroughfares and the mass of people close at hand, the hospital is so designed and situated that a breezy sweep of open space at the rear provides as much air and sunshine as if erected in the country. This for a metropolitan hospital is a vast boon, as are also the beautiful grounds attached and carefully cultivated, providing not only a pleasant outlook and promenade for the inmates, but space for additions to the present building, when the need arises.

Prince Alfred Hospital is built on the pavilion method, with wide spans between each pavilion, and broad verandahs or balconies to each ward 10 feet in width. Each ward is 135 feet long by 26 feet wide, and 16 feet high: 8 feet for each bed being allowed. The architecture is plain and simple, but very substantial, especially the administrative block, which is of massive construction and noble proportions.

About 246 indoor patients can be received, and proportionate number of out-patients (40,000 out-patients attend annually free of charge) treated. About twelve honorary doctors give valuable skill and time, and there are seven resident doctors on the staff. The nursing staff numbers sixty, including the Matron and six sisters.

Some years ago the Prince Alfred Hospital was chartered as a training school for nurses. The course is one of three years, with annual examinations. Lectures are given by the honorary members of the staff, and University professors, the matron and others, and the standard is high, since a larger number of educated women are presenting themselves for training than can be received.

Sydney is well known as the happy hunting field for quacks of all kinds, and until a very few years ago this was especially true of the nursing class. A dozen years ago a competent nurse was a rarity indeed, and even in institutions mediocrity was the rule. But all that is changed now, a higher standard is discouraging undesirable applicants, and raising the tone generally. The forward movement has reached us and borne us on so far, but greater impetus yet is required. As yet, any woman can wear the costume and pose as a nurse, doing incalculable harm to the profession in the public estimation, and endangering life recklessly. A large number of "Homes," so-called, are in existence here (there are about three "Homes" in Sydney where only trained nurses are admitted), employing a large number of women who are the rejected of the hospitals, or worse still, wholly ignorant of

nursing. Yet doctors give these women employment, and the public give them the same fees that a nurse of twenty years of experience would command.

Nurses are apathetic, doctors indifferent, the public not yet roused to the danger: therefore, registration, or indeed any unity for mutual advantage and protection is in abeyance, and will be until some capable and disinterested effort is made, and things brought to a working basis.

Meanwhile, however efficient our schools may be, however capable the graduates, very little practical advantage accrues either to themselves or the public from the years of arduous training.

Unfortunately we have no accommodation for nurses to be sent out to private work from the hospital direct. A large and beautifully appointed "Home" has been erected within the last few years to provide accommodation for our own nurses, but cannot, as yet, go beyond them. This Home would, I am sure, compare favourably with any of the European ones, and is much appreciated by the nurses. Although plain, it is most completely and substantially appointed, and quite detached from the Hospital, so that when off duty the nurses have the advantage of a happy and refined home life. Each nurse has a bedroom to herself. There are spacious sitting and dining rooms, a well-stocked library of fiction and professional works, abundant bathing accommodation and offices where the nurses can practise cooking, bandaging, &c. For recreation they have music, tennis, &c., provided.

Day nurses are on duty from 6 a.m. till 8.30 p.m., deducting from that time one and a half hours for meals, forty minutes in their own rooms in the morning, and three hours off duty every alternate afternoon and evening. One day and one Sunday off every month. Practically not quite ten hours on duty daily. Nurses have three weeks holiday annually and sisters four weeks. Probationers have £16 per annum for the first year, £24 the second year, and £32 in their third year of training. Nurses-in-charge and sisters have higher salaries in proportion. All ward work, scrubbing floors excepted, is done by the nurses, who are very proud of their work.

The staff are a happy and united band of workers, who cheerfully, and with very few exceptions, do their work for the work's sake, and strive to do it well; and in this they are heartily encouraged and aided by all in authority.

The Hospital is worked on the lines intended by its promoters, who believed that "from its position, its modern construction and improved arrangements, and its connection with the Medical School of the University, the Prince Alfred Hospital should take its position as the leading hospital of the colony, and provide for the ever-growing requirements of an increasing population." (It is supported by voluntary contributions and a Government subsidy).

Its wards are even now crowded to excess, and should an epidemic visit us, the Hospital would prove inadequate to the demands made on it. Its operative work is very extensive (1,327 operations last year). A very large proportion of major operations are sent in from the country districts; in this department there is constant advance to keep pace with the requirements of modern science.

I trust your readers will be interested in this little sketch of the work in Sydney, for we are keenly interested in any news of the Nursing world "at home."

NOEL.

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