

from prison, will be able, on the strength of their certificates, to gain admission to private houses and institutions, and once more to prey upon the public and to disgrace their profession. Some ten years ago this condition of affairs was felt to be so dangerous to the public, and so discreditable to nurses, that the British Nurses' Association was founded by some of our leading matrons to bring about reform. We commenced a voluntary Register of Nurses, enrolling women who had had three years' hospital training and who were able to produce proofs of good personal character. Our object was to prove, by this voluntary measure, the public and professional advantages of a system of Registration of Nurses, and so, in due time, to obtain an Act of Parliament making the system compulsory, like the registration of medical men. The Register of the Association has been published each year since 1890, and, in 1893, after an exhaustive public inquiry, we so convinced the Privy Council of the value and usefulness of our work that a Royal Charter was granted, incorporating the Royal British Nurses' Association. But the Register only remained a voluntary measure and was bitterly opposed for reasons into which I need not at present enter. I refer to these facts, because they prove the earnest attempt made by nurses to reform and raise their profession—succeeding so far as to be the first body of working women to be incorporated by Royal Charter. It is also necessary to point the moral to all other women's societies. Through causes into which I need not enter on this occasion, the Royal British Nurses' Association has fallen under the control and management of a few medical men, who have publicly avowed themselves to be opposed to the very legislation for nurses which the Association was founded to obtain; and the nurses, at present, owing to their economic dependence, are powerless in their own Association to bring about the reforms and the organization which are so urgently necessary. For the moment, the attempt to introduce any definite system of organization into the nursing profession has been checked, and prevented, by those who are opposed to any sort of independence and legal status for women; but the matter is of such great importance to the sick that the public must now deal with it, and at this Meeting I would urge that it is essentially a question for women to consider. Nursing is one of woman's most natural professions. It has been raised by English women, during the last fifteen or twenty years, to a position, and to a degree of efficiency and usefulness, such as it has never previously attained in this or in any other country. Its very success and popularity, however, have brought the grave dangers in their train to which I have already alluded; and it appears to me to be peculiarly the duty of women, in all ranks of life, to insist that this woman's calling should be

made as useful, and should be rendered and kept as pure, as possible. It seems to me to be the duty of all women to help in elevating the standard of nursing, and in demanding that those to whom mothers, wives, and daughters entrust the well-being, and even the lives, of their nearest and dearest, should be thoroughly fit to undertake such trust and responsibility. I would, therefore, speaking as I do with a wide knowledge of the gravity of this matter to the sick, urge upon every woman to do what she can, especially by influencing Members of Parliament to make an inquiry into the need of protection for the public, by the institution of nursing reforms. By this means alone can be fulfilled the hopes of those who, for the sake of every interest concerned, desire to see the Nursing Profession properly organized.

Starting, however, from the fact that at the present time there is no organization of the profession, I would explain, briefly, the views which I have for some years advocated upon this subject. In the first place, I consider that every woman who desires to be recognized as a trained nurse, must be prepared to pass through a definite and organized curriculum of education to fit her for the duties and responsibilities which will devolve upon her as a member of an honourable public profession, in the same way in which men make it the chief business of their lives to qualify for the work to which they intend to devote themselves. With women, frequently, the work which they undertake is considered as secondary to domestic and family claims, to be taken up and laid down at will. I desire, therefore, to emphasize the necessity that exists, for women to grasp the fact, that, if they are to fit themselves to win confidence and distinction in any work, in which they desire to earn their living, they must face the necessity of passing through years of educational drudgery, during which all other interests must be secondary and subservient. I would venture, therefore, to submit the following curriculum of nursing education, together with some suggestions for the better organization of the Nursing profession:—

#### CURRICULUM OF NURSING EDUCATION.

The Nursing schools in connection with our large hospitals must, for the future, be organized on a definite collegiate basis. The majority of them are now schools only in name. The organization of Nursing schools on such a basis would necessitate the establishment of a system of preliminary education for nurses in general and special knowledge, which women, desiring to become probationers, might be advised to attain before entering the wards for practical work, so that they may begin this work, in the same way that medical students do at the present time, with a basis of scientific knowledge. This preliminary education could be acquired in existing

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)