

The Entrance of the Nursing Profession into Reform and Preventive Work.*

By MISS LINDA RICHARDS,
State Hospital, Taunton, Mass.

The ancient ideas of nursing seem to have been as found in Catholic sisterhoods, which did excellent work in that way, the caring for the sick and unfortunate. They made no protest against existing conditions, nor did they, as far as is known, seek to correct them.

It was Florence Nightingale who introduced the spirit of reformation and teaching into the work of nursing. She it was who overthrew old systems and replaced them with a mission for the nurse to preach health and practice sanitation and hygiene with authority. With her began a new era in nursing, and her name is, and will always be, held sacred by training schools and nurses the world over.

Democracy, by permitting increase of responsibility and opportunity for women, has shown rapid development in the nursing profession.

In most of the old aristocratic countries, the nurse is still a handmaid or upper servant, while English-speaking nations are developing her into a positive and recognised force, and making her services of ever-increasing value, not alone in her own profession, but in the many others in which she may to-day be found.

In New Zealand a nurse (Mrs. Neill) holds a government position as inspector of hospitals. She has had great influence in shaping legislation regarding the education of nurses.

Mrs. Norrie, of Denmark, a nurse, is secretary of the National Council of Women, and has done much for the advancement of the cause of woman's work and also for suffrage.

In London Miss Morten, a nurse, as member of the school board, has been instrumental in placing nurses in public schools to watch for infection and prevent its spread.

As a reformer in civil service, Miss Louise Darche a nurse, in her ten years' struggle against machine politics, took a training school in New York City out of their grasp and placed it upon the merit system.

In civic work, Miss Wald, a nurse, founder of the nurses' settlement in New York City, has distinguished herself and profession. Seven years of conscientious, intelligent, self-forgetting service for the public good, has made her a power in every branch of municipal work—play-grounds, over-crowded tenements, and all matters of like import, coming under her care. She meets all

commissioners, and is consulted upon all matters of improvement and civic reform.

In Yonkers, N. Y., Mrs. von Wagner, a nurse, has for four years held an official position on the board of health as inspector of tenements, where her work is thoroughly appreciated, and valued more highly with each year of service.

A number of nurses are at present studying to fit themselves for similar positions. In Boston, Massachusetts, a nurse, Miss McBride, holds an official position as visitor of the children's institutions department. She visits all truant and reform schools, and homes where city children are placed, and has charge of all clothing supplied them by the city. This department also employs a nurse who goes to all these institutions in the capacity of visiting nurse.

A nurse, Miss Gragg, holds an official position as visitor to all state insane patients and paupers who are boarded in private homes in the State of Massachusetts. She looks into the sanitary conditions of these homes and sees what care is given these boarders.

The Boston system of instructive district nursing, which has been in operation for years, means very much more than the name implies, the nurses being teachers of sanitation and hygiene, and tenement inspectors in addition to their work as nurses. Miss McLeod, a nurse, in charge of the Victorian Order of District Nurses in certain districts in Canada, is constantly travelling from town to town, visiting her nurses, and is very thorough in her work of inspecting the homes she enters, and she also gives instruction in hygiene and sanitation.

Miss Damer, a nurse, is officially connected with charity organisation work in Buffalo, N. Y., and is doing much good by her wise counsel and thorough work.

Mrs. Kinney, superintendent of army nursing, visits and inspects all hospitals belonging to the American army, wherever they may be located. She is now in the Philippines. One nurse, Miss Ruthford, is secretary of a society whose work is that of rescuing abandoned children and finding for them good country homes.

In Baltimore, Md., nurses are officers in the society of health to aid in the war against tuberculosis.

Coloured nurses have instituted a movement to establish district nursing which will lead to better sanitary conditions in the homes of the coloured people.

Mrs. Fenwick, of London, England, a nurse, as journalist takes up the cause of industrial betterment and municipal improvement, etc., as well as nursing, and her name is sufficient to enable all who know her to judge of the thoroughness of her work.

* Read at the National Council of Women of the United States at Washington, D. C., Feb. 19th-25th, 1902.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)