

lescent institutions, for combined action, if these, by union among themselves, made such combination possible.

"An organisation of a semi-public character, such as is here suggested, might postpone the demand, which will otherwise be inevitable, for replacing 'voluntary taxation,' which falls only on the willing, by a special rate which all must pay, and, while maintaining a more lively general interest and more elastic control than municipal management can give, leaves open the door to private benefactions."

II.—NURSING.

"The value of hospitals as schools of surgery and medicine is hardly greater than is their usefulness as a training ground for nurses, and the field is no less large. As every young doctor gives some of his first years to hospital work, so must every qualified nurse, and two or three years' work in a hospital is now needed as a basis for the special experience required for institutional, district or private nursing. Moreover, it is an employment suitable to women, and since the demand for trained nursing is great and steadily increasing the number of those who wish to take the training is proportionately large.

"There has been an astonishing change in this matter since Miss Nightingale volunteered to organise female nursing for the soldiers in the Crimea, a change which, happily, she herself survives to see. This change is, perhaps, the best fruit the past half-century has to show, and in quality as well as quantity it still grows and ripens fast. Not only are skilled women available for every public or private emergency, not only has each city its nursing institute ready to respond to all appeals, but every little country district is finding that about £100 a year is well spent in this form of assistance to the doctor's work, by which the whole population benefits, and to which all who will can subscribe.

"In every neighbourhood so provided the direct influence on health is considerable; but far greater must be the gradual educational influence exerted, which, it may be hoped, will eventually bring enlightenment to the common ideas of the people, not only as to the special requirements of a sick-room, but on such subjects as cleanliness, the care of young children and the preparation of food, not for invalids alone; as well as upon many other points of ordinary domestic economy, which a trained nurse will generally understand, and will naturally inculcate.

"On this I may quote from a letter written by Miss Nightingale, addressed to the late Duke of Westminster in 1896, in connection with the Queen's Jubilee Institute.

"She writes: 'We look upon the district nurse, if she is what she should be, and if we give her the training she should have, as the great civiliser of the poor, training as well as nursing them out of ill-health into good health (health missionaries), out of drink into self-control, but all without preaching, without patronising—as friends in sympathy. But let them hold the standard high as nurses.' This civilising influence is now at work in all parts of London, and I will endeavour shortly to describe what seems to be its essential features.

"It will be seen that the parish is by no means the only unit of area for the organisation of district nursing in London. Many plans are being tried, and certain conclusions may, I think, be formulated, the

first being that the unit of area will be governed by the character of the nursing given as regards professional skill. The amount of training and aptitude brought to the work varies very much, and in the work to be done there is room for all grades. Even if it were possible that all who undertake to help the sick in their homes should be highly-trained hospital nurses, this would not be desirable; and the shape that the work has spontaneously assumed in London is not so chaotic as it may at first appear. If a map were prepared to show its main features in connection with parish divisions, it would display a comparatively small number of nursing centres, and surrounding each of these a large area of parishes, not having any independent organisation, but accustomed to 'send for' a trained nurse when required. The more remote such a centre is, the more likely that a special nurse will be provided for the parish.

"For highly-skilled nursing, the larger unit thus obtained is in many ways convenient. A number of nurses collected at one centre, their course of work arranged and supervised by a lady superintendent who is herself a trained nurse, can accomplish far more, and do it far better, than if distributed amongst the parishes, and placed each individually under parish control.

"But it will follow that their work should be confined strictly to its professional side. The need for these services must constitute the paramount claim. Established as a centre of nursing assistance among a population containing adherents of many religious beliefs, and a still larger proportion of those who have practically none, the response cannot be limited to those of any particular religious community, nor be associated in any way with religious propaganda. It will follow also that the nurses will have no time to spare for anything but their regular professional work. Their round of visits will be like those of a doctor, the patients being each in turn treated and then left to the care of their friends, while the nurse, promising to 'come again' to-morrow, passes on. It is equally out of the question that nurses so employed should be almoners of charity, or exponents of thrift and collectors of savings.

"If the working establishment of a parish, or of a mission centre, includes a skilled nurse, the serious cases of illness which require her first care (a varying demand) will generally leave her with leisure to perform other duties, such as those I have mentioned, and these may be regarded in the eyes of those who employ her, or even in her own, as of the very first importance, and as the end to which everything done should conduce. From the fact that other qualities are thus held to be of equal or even greater importance than professional skill as a nurse, and that they can be secured, if not more easily, at least more cheaply, it results that for most parish or mission nurses a lower standard of training is accepted. Quite apart from religious propaganda, or the inculcation of thrift, or the administration of charity, it is felt that a nurse who may often have time to spare, who, the distance being less, can more easily drop in again, or perhaps come round at night when needed, and the scope of whose duties might extend even to household assistance, is of wider use and greater value in the concentrated work of a parish or of a mission than would be one of higher training strictly confined to her special professional function.

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