

The Irish Nursing World.

The first impulse of the nursing enthusiast is to make a bee line for the hospitals in any city which she may happen to visit, and, by constant comparison, to acquire a severely critical habit in relation thereto—a habit which one can imagine very useful in an organised scheme of nursing education in which inspection, comparison, and deduction might be employed for the general benefit.

During my recent visit to the Irish capital, time would not permit of any complete survey of the numerous hospitals doing excellent work in the city, but, guided by an expert, I was shown specimens of the general and special hospitals, a hospital for incurables, a home hospital, and a nursing institution, so that I was enabled to form an opinion on the quality of each.

There is something extraordinarily touchy in the temper of the hospital world—this is not merely an expression of personal opinion, but the keenest advocate of nursing in Ireland will hardly venture to deny that skilled nursing, as we appraise it to-day, was non-existent in the Emerald Isle a quarter of a century ago.

The reason is not far to seek. Medicine was still grappling with essential principles, and had not yet given basic laws to those who apply practically the domestic and medical treatment of the sick; now that the fundamental law of health, Be Clean, has been accepted as the bed-rock of hygienic science, the nebulous necromancy of the medicine man has evaporated. Science has given us verified fact, and every step forward must be firmly planted on truth. We cannot afford to trifle with tumid theories; our work is wide based upon the law of light, and Life and Death are its issues. Thus this first principle is at the disposal of all, and by comparison one readily realises that any assumption upon the part of one section of the community to pose as an infallible example of the best to another is untenable. Progress is being made by magic celerity in our time, the mode of to-day may be obsolete to-morrow, therefore the wary are ever on their guard, that they may not be surprised; these wise ones know that in the slough of self-satisfaction one hears not the fleet footfall of the passer-by.

The London hospital world is somewhat apt to plume itself on perfection, and to imagine that the world generally is afar off. It is not. It is just a wee world, around which the given word can whisk in a few hours, and the unspoken thought in half that time. Moreover, perfection is not.

Thus there is no reason for surprise when one visits hospitals at home and abroad to find nursing education, both in theory and technique, quite up to our Metropolitan standard, and in some instances even more comprehensive. Who will deny that to become a really all-round efficient nurse a woman

must have practical experience in the nursing of medical, surgical, fever, and obstetric cases? And yet in how many of our leading nurse-training schools is such a curriculum possible? We do not know of one; and yet we are constantly told that the only first-class schools are attached to the large Metropolitan hospitals, and, in consequence, the Matrons of these hospitals alone are qualified to express an opinion on professional education and status, an opinion with which we totally disagree.

Take, for instance, the first hospital we had the pleasure of visiting in Dublin—the Richmond, Whitworth, and Hardwick Government Hospitals, where in four distinct buildings, containing 312 beds, medical, surgical, fever, and epidemic diseases are treated, and where the pupil nurses pass through these various departments. A hospital of 300 beds is, in our opinion, an ideal size in which to train nurses, as the Superintendent can personally supervise the school; each pupil and the quality of her work is known to her, and she is not merely an administrative head, hidden away behind office walls, but a living personality, taking an active part in the teaching and training of pupils, and herself the example of all she wishes each one to emulate. Moreover, to the governing body and to the medical staff these junior nurses are not merely an unknown quantity, here to-day and gone to-morrow, but individuals whose work may be of the utmost value, as each one demonstrates how precious is efficiency in the care of the sick.

I spent some very instructive hours in the Richmond Hospital, which has been modernised of late years, and on which an immense amount of thought must have been expended in its rebuilding. Its arrangements are beautiful, up-to-date, and comfortable; as one enters one appreciates the breezy atmosphere and general alertness, I could have guessed, had I not known it before, that the Lady Superintendent was a woman of action; the tone of a hospital is set by the Matron—fine woman, fine work, and *vice versa*.

In Miss MacDonnell's charming room I met Sir Thornley Stoker and Dr. O'Carroll, names well known to nurses this side of the Channel—the former looking eminently business-like in a speckless white overall—and with whom I made an interesting tour of inspection. The hospital is built on the pavilion plan, and the structure of wards and annexes, highly polished floors, heating, ventilation, fittings, and furniture are of the most approved pattern. The whole building appeared to me in exquisite order, even streams of sunlight flooding every ward failed to make apparent any dust or disorder. The hospital is surrounded by fine open spaces, so those invaluable factors in the recovery of the sick—light and air—are abundantly available.

The operating theatre has been constructed on

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