

The "Debuts" of School Nursing in Paris.*

By MME. JACQUES.

Matron of the Training School for Nurses of the Assistance Publique, à Paris.

The creation of a Training School of Nursing at "La Salpêtrière," destined to supply the hospitals centralised in Paris under the direction of the "Administration générale de l'Assistance Publique," has permitted an attempt which would have been impossible heretofore.

In the month of October, an article appeared in the medical press by M. André Mesureur, Chef du Cabinet du Directeur de l'Assistance Publique, who has personally organised the school of "La Salpêtrière." He wrote:—

WE MUST HAVE HOSPITAL NURSES IN OUR SCHOOLS.

"The primary school is *par excellence* the hot-bed of epidemics; it is also the centre for sores, dirt, and slight chronic illnesses; why not add to the four rules the elementary rules of hygiene? The teachers know their duties; they give theoretical lessons, and try to realise the necessary care foreseen in the rules of the school. This is a task both heavy and delicate, and they are already overworked. They cannot leave their desk, and, to teach hygiene by practice, it is necessary to have a competent person, *having gone through a complete professional instruction.*

"The nurse will need help at every step—in the school, in the town hall, in the hospital, at the "Bureau de bienfaisance," she must be welcomed as an ally, as an instrument of propaganda. It would be as well that she should belong to the staff of the Assistance Publique; besides the question of professional instruction, which is essential, it would be necessary in this undertaking, which is very tiring, to renew the staff; the nurses will, of course, form a part of this administration. Boards of Charity, Dispensaries, visiting doctors belonging to the Boards of Charity, Hospitals, would be called upon by her.

"The personal qualities and professional instruction of the School Nurse will play a great and decisive part. She will be the working pivot of this department; the inspecting doctor must find in her an experienced auxiliary, a real hospital nurse."

Thanks to the help of the Municipal Council of Paris, and of the President of the Education Commission, M. Rebeillard, the trial was attempted. Let us say at once that it has given the best results. And yet *what scepticism, what discouraging advice for the promoters of the idea, what threats from all sides.*

* Read at the Jubilee Congress of District Nursing, Liverpool, May, 1909.

Alone, the two "Directrices" of the schools where this first organisation was tried, shared the confidence of the pupils of the Salpêtrière School and of their Matron.

A preparatory meeting was organised; the doctors, the Inspector of Primary Schools, and many other officials were present to hear the programme, drawn up by M. André Mesureur, of this innovation, of the hopes it gave birth to, and of the difficulties they expected and were prepared to overcome. The two "Directrices," Madame Besnard and Madame Alombert, declared they were certain of success. A few weeks after, our little "blue ribbons," as the pupils of the Salpêtrière School for Nursing are called, crossed the threshold of the two schools.

They were the first nurses who, for the first time in Paris, placed their devotion, their hospital science, their teacher's authority on hygiene by practice, at the service of our little school children. Few people knew of these "debuts"; but they thought that it was *something more for the protection of the Paris children's health* in the organising of our public institutions. The accommodation was very simple; here it was a closet used for this new undertaking, a gas tube, a stove, and a saucepan; a watertap and the closet to be used as a sink; this installation was to suffice; a small room formed by a screen and containing a small commode. In the other school the kitchen itself was used, being in close proximity to the stove supplying hot water. The pupils set to work, and their most faithful allies were the school children themselves, who gave our two "blue ribbons" the name of "*dames de progrès*," to their great satisfaction. They conformed themselves to the programme drawn up by Mr. André Mesureur.

"She visits the schools regularly and frequently, when the medical inspector can only come twice a month. She examines all the children—their noses, eyes, ears, and throats; if she perceives a suspicious case, she refers it to her chief; if it is a serious case, she takes the necessary measures, transfers to the hospital, etc. She is accustomed to hospital work, and recognises slight cases, and she knows how to apply a first dressing; she will wash a cut, will hasten the healing of a sore. Then she will take aside the untidy and dirty pupils who are neglected by their parents, ignoring themselves the use of water. The hair, eyes, nose, and nails are subjects of practical demonstrations. Useless to add that she must become the king fairy to these little children left to themselves and their dirt, for many she will be a wise adviser. How is it possible not to expect much from her intervention among the little girls.

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