

AN APPRECIATION OF THE LATE MISS MARGARET HUXLEY, R.G.N., M.A.

On January 10th, 1940, Margaret Huxley passed away at the age of 87 at Elpis, Dublin.

The year 1881 found Miss Huxley in training at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London. In 1883 she came to Ireland, and from that time until her death all her interests were centred in this country. Her first post was that of Matron of the National Eye and Ear Hospital, Molesworth Street, Dublin, where she remained for less than a year. The Board of Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital, having heard of her worth, appointed her their Lady Superintendent, which post she held until 1902.

Systematic training for Nurses was non-existent when Miss Huxley took up duty at Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital, but it was not long before the Nurses trained by her were everywhere in demand throughout the country. One of her nurses, holding an important post to-day, writes: "I owe my success in my profession to the training I received from Miss Huxley. Words fail to express my admiration of her. Miss Huxley was without doubt what a good Hospital Matron should be—a strict disciplinarian. Strict and just in all her dealings, she showed no favouritism; she could reprimand severely when she found it necessary, but she never showed temper. Her power of observation was wonderful. She never failed to do three rounds daily of the Hospital Wards; even if late out at night she visited them before retiring." Her work throughout was characterised by thoroughness, and she expected this quality from all with whom she came into contact. It was a principle with Miss Huxley that patients never became "cases." She knew every thing about every patient, and she expected her nurses to be equally interested in their well-being. She was always dignified, and commanded the respect of all with whom she came into contact.

Shortly after she came to Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital a very important member of the Hospital Staff came into her office with his tall hat on. She looked at him, and very quietly remarked, "The patients and the students always remove their hats when they wish to speak to me." He bore her no ill-will.

She was a woman of very simple tastes. She was unostentatious and self-disciplined, and she greatly disliked publicity for herself. Her influence was very far-reaching, and she was consulted on all matters regarding Nursing by the Medical and Nursing professions, as well as by the general public. She weighed her words, and the advice she gave was invariably well worth taking. The care of the sick and suffering, the training of Nurses, and the organisa-

tion of the Nursing profession were the objects of her life. It was a very great disappointment to Miss Huxley in her later years to find that Irish Nurses failed to realise the advantages of professional organisation.

In 1891, while still Lady Superintendent of Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital, realising the need for nursing care and medical and surgical treatment for private patients, she acquired an ordinary dwelling-house and opened it as the first Nursing Home in this country. She formed a company to run it, and trained Nurses were appointed to staff it and, at the same time, some of the Probationers from Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital were sent there to gain experience in the care of private patients. The Home was a great success, and eventually other houses were bought and converted into the now well-known "Elpis," which she managed from 1902 until a short time before her death.

In 1900, with a few enthusiastic members of the Nursing profession, the Irish Nurses' Association was formed, and Miss Huxley was elected the first President. When in 1908 a co-operative Nurses' Home and Club was started she was the moving spirit, and spent endless time and thought in furnishing and making the house comfortable.

Miss Huxley worked ceaselessly for a uniform system of education and training for Nurses, and for State Registration. This took both time and money. In 1893, with the help of Dr. Richard Hayes, she was instrumental in starting a Central School where the nurses in training in a large number of the Dublin Hospitals received Lectures, and were examined. This school was ready, when State Registration came, to carry on and give all the theoretical teaching required for the State Examinations, and it has proved of inestimable value to the nurses in training, and to the participating hospitals. Miss Huxley acted as Hon. Secretary until illness pre-

vented her attendance at the meetings. No one knows how much work she did, and how much money she spent in the cause of State Registration of Nurses, attending meetings in London, and interesting the Irish Members of Parliament in the Nursing profession.

A Foundation Member of the International Council of Nurses, she had numerous friends, as she attended many of the International Meetings. At the Conference in Finland in 1925 she was made an Honorary Member of the Finnish Nurses' Association, an honour she greatly appreciated.

In 1928 the University of Dublin conferred on Miss Huxley the Honorary Degree of M.A. in recognition of her valuable work for Scientific Nursing in Ireland. In answering a letter of congratulation she said: "I feel the University, by their action, has honoured all Nurses, and I hope we shall continue to deserve the good opinion



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