

*The Progress of Nursing in the British Isles.

BY

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THE progress which has been made in medicine, surgery, and hygiene, during the last few generations, may be mainly attributed to the application of methods of precision alike in thought and action, and in the fields both of research and of practical effort. The faculties thus exercised have been developed and quickened by the light of ever increasing scientific discoveries, and the fruits of these discoveries have been applied, by men as good and wise as they are learned, for the general benefit of mankind.

It is, however, only within quite recent years that method, precision, and organisation have come fully into play for the guidance of women who are engaged in the great and noble work of tending the sick and suffering. It was, of course, inevitable that these women should in time feel the influence of the scientific progress around them, and that they should occupy a special place in the societies to which this progress had brought so many and such far reaching changes. Their special endowments of sympathy, gentleness, and sensibility, and their capacity for attention to the minutest details, point to them as furnishing the most fitting channels for the bestowal upon individuals of the benefits which have arisen from the advancement of scientific and hygienic knowledge. But, however great and varied may be their natural gifts, women unprepared by training can neither understand nor participate in a work which, if attempted apart from the control of discipline, and of special education both of mind and body, must always terminate in failure. For these reasons it has come to be recognised that Nurses, in order to become efficient servants of suffering mankind, must submit their faculties to proper education, and must learn to exercise them with method and accuracy. Thus, and thus only, can they become the real handmaids of the physician, the surgeon, and the sanitarian. Even in England and its sister kingdoms this cardinal truth is as yet only partially realised, and it is still very imperfectly carried into practice; but steady and encouraging progress is being made, and the recent past is full of promise for the future.

Scarcely a generation has passed away since it was thought, by all save a few who were in advance of their time, that any woman with willing hands

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was fit to carry out the directions of the scientifically trained medical man and hygienist: now, no hospital of importance would be considered complete without a training school for nurses, in which a clearly defined curriculum of theoretic and practical education is enforced. As yet, the several standards of training and efficiency are almost as numerous as the Institutions themselves. By degrees, however, at least an approach to uniformity has been arrived at in those which stand highest in the esteem of the medical profession, and in that of the more advanced trained Nurses. Let us hope that the day is not far distant when practically complete uniformity will have been arrived at and established, and when the honourable title of "Trained Nurse" will be borne only by those who have arrived at a definite degree of efficiency and of technical knowledge, as tested and ascertained by means of a recognised examination.

The Royal British Nurses' Association has already done much towards the accomplishment of so desirable an end. The Association was founded five years ago, in order to unite into a single body those who devote their lives and energies to attendance upon the sick, both for the furtherance of their common interests, and to organise them into a recognised profession. The governing body of the Association soon became convinced of the necessity of establishing a register of trained Nurses, which has ever since been maintained in accordance with the main principles which have been laid down by the General Council of Medical Education for the maintenance, under the powers of the Act of Parliament, of a register of the members of the medical profession. The Nursing Register now bears upon its roll the names of two thousand trained Nurses, nearly all of whom have undergone a three years' training in a recognised Hospital or Hospitals. In addition to applying searching tests to ascertain the efficiency, the personal character, and the general qualifications of all those who apply to be inscribed, the Association exercises the disciplinary power of erasing the names of any who, after registration, may prove to be unworthy, by reason either of inefficiency or of misconduct. In the year 1890, the Queen was pleased to bestow on the Association the title of "Royal"; and last year it received the distinction of Incorporation by Royal Charter. The Corporation includes amongst its members and governing body, in addition to trained Nurses and the heads of the Nursing Departments attached to many of the principal Hospitals, a large number of the most distinguished physicians and surgeons in the British Kingdom. By this means, the harmonious and subordinate co-operation of the Nursing element with the medical profession is secured. The Corporation is now in process of establishing a complete course of lectures on those subjects, such as Elementary

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