

The New York City Training School for Nurses.

It will interest our professional readers to know what vast improvements are being effected by many of the able Superintendents of the American Nurse Training Schools; we therefore insert the Report read by Miss Louise Darche at the Annual Commencement of the School in connection with the New York City Training School, Blackwell's Island, and we specially commend to the Hospital Managers of this country, this method of acquainting the Governors of Nursing Training Schools of the progress of the work, by receiving annually an official Report from the Superintendent of the School.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—In presenting to you the Twentieth Annual Report of the Training School I will, with your permission, go back to the time when the School was first organised, and give you a short history of its inception, its progress, and its development up to the present day.

In April of the year 1875, two or three years after the Bellevue Training School had been successfully started, Dr. Kitchen, then Chief of Staff of Charity Hospital, and responsible for the general management and Nursing of the Hospital, recommended a change in the system of Nursing to the Commissioners of Charities and Correction. About the middle of May of the same year the Mayor of the City, the Hon. W. H. Wickham, at the suggestion of the Commissioners, invited the ladies comprising the State Charities Aid Association to meet Drs. James R. Wood, E. G. Janeway, Austin Flint, and the Board of Commissioners, to consult with them as to the propriety of forming a Training School for Nurses.

As a result of this auspicious meeting of Doctors, Commissioners, "Ladies Aid" Ladies and Mayor, a notice appeared in the daily papers stating that a School for Nurses would be opened the first day of the ensuing August which would afford an opportunity to worthy young women to enter upon a course of training. Suitable terms were used to express the advantages of such a training, and a sufficient number of young women applied to make it possible to open the school 1st of August, 1875, with sixteen pupil Nurses in attendance.

At first no trained Nurse was provided to serve as head of the Training School, and the Chief of Staff was left to perform the duties of training Matron towards these sixteen new and raw recruits as best he could. Towards the end of the first year, however, one of the pupil Nurses was selected and placed over the rest to act in the capacity of supervisor and instructor. During the second and immediately succeeding years more Nurses were added until the number of forty was reached, and this continued the capacity of the School until 1886.

In 1886 several important changes in the School management took place. The position of Chief of Staff was abolished, and the School was placed under a Board of Managers, the members of which were to be elected yearly from the Medical Board of the Hospital. The Supervising Nurse continued in immediate charge as before. This change, so far as the School was concerned, was not beneficial. The appointing power and real authority was placed in the hands of an ever-changing Board of Managers, while

all responsibility as to discipline, conduct, and nursing efficiency rested upon the shoulders of the Supervising Nurse. But one result could follow such an ill-advised arrangement. The School gradually deteriorated in character and discipline, the Supervisor was blamed for what she was powerless to prevent, and at the end of a two years' struggle she resigned her position. At this juncture of affairs Mrs. Frederic Rhinelander Jones, Chairman of the State Charities Aid Visiting Committee to Charity Hospital, came to the rescue. She recommended to the Commissioners that two duly qualified women be appointed to fill the position of the late supervisor, and to supersede the Matron of the Hospital. And in order to avoid all the friction which had hitherto existed between these two heads of separate departments suggested that one appointee should be made Superintendent of the School and Matron of the Hospital, and that the other should act as Assistant Superintendent and Assistant Matron. Mrs. Jones' advice was not only accepted, but she was empowered by the Commissioners to secure two women to fill the positions she advocated; and on the recommendation of Miss Perkins, late Superintendent of Bellevue Training School, selected Miss Kimber and myself.

It was clearly understood that the school had fallen into disrepute on account of mismanagement, and that Mayor Hewitt and the Commissioners of 1888 were anxious to have it brought into line, and made the credit to the city it deserved to be. To this end the new Superintendent was assured that all support necessary would be given her to inaugurate and maintain discipline and efficiency on a strictly merit system.

The first year of the new administration was chiefly spent in introducing new methods of training, in readjusting old methods, in eliminating bad elements, and in a continuous effort to bring the whole standard of the Nursing work up to a higher level. The Nurses were made more comfortable in the Home, necessary furniture was procured, and paid, instead of work-house help, introduced.

In the spring of the next year, 1889, the Nursing of Gouverneur Hospital was added to the School, and valuable experience in the care of patients suffering from acute diseases was secured for the Nurses.

Again in the spring of 1890 the scope of the school was further increased by the addition of the Nursing service in Harlem Hospital.

The school had now become responsible for the Nursing of four distinct Hospitals all under one central board of control—that of the Commissioners of Charities and Correction—but each having its own Medical Board, its own special methods of dealing with the sick, and each containing its own distinctive class of patients.

Since 1890 the school has not enlarged its borders, but has expended its efforts in endeavouring to improve the ground it covers, and to instruct and train its Nurses to be a credit to its name. The establishment of a school-registry, on a co-operative basis, has been of material benefit to the Nurses in giving them a foothold in the city, and is steadily making its way in competition with other school registries and agencies.

Thus in briefest outline has the Training School during the last twenty years grown and developed. That it stands to-day in the front rank with the other large Training Schools in this country is due partly to the varied and wide experience to be gained in the four hospitals it nurses, but chiefly to the fact that it

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