

HOSPITAL NURSING.

The work of St. John's House in training probationers at various Metropolitan hospitals commenced about the year 1848, and to this great religious foundation must therefore be ascribed the credit of initiating the modern system. But the establishment of the Nightingale Fund at St. Thomas's Hospital, and especially the work of Miss Nightingale in laying down the foundation principles on which nursing should be conducted, and the relations which should exist between the nursing staff and other hospital workers, must always cause Miss Nightingale to be regarded as the chief pioneer of modern hospital nursing in this country. But it is only just and right to emphasise the fact that several great improvements which have since been effected have undoubtedly emanated from other training schools. The admission of gentlewomen as probationers was practically due to the Nightingale Fund, and the effect of this departure in not only raising the prestige of the nursing profession, but in increasing the efficiency, and therefore the usefulness of nurses, cannot be over estimated. In most leading institutions, now, all the posts, whether as regular or paying probationers, are filled by well-educated gentlewomen. The next important step was the adoption of the three years' system of training, and this has now been, after a long discussion, and strong opposition, practically admitted to be necessary both for the welfare of the sick, and for the most satisfactory working of the Nurse Training Schools. It will seem strange to future workers that this principle should have been bitterly contested, but the strong opinion expressed by the Select Committee of the House of Lords, which enquired into this matter in 1891, has practically settled the question. The latest advance has been the institution of a course of preliminary training, through which every probationer must pass before she can be admitted into several of our largest training schools; and to the Royal Infirmary of Glasgow belongs the credit of inaugurating this improvement.

Events are now rapidly moving forward, and those who have watched the current for some years are confident that before very long it will be generally demanded that an examination in ordinary educational subjects shall be passed by those who desire to become hospital probationers, and that the system of training shall be made more systematic and more comprehensive than it is at present. The natural result of such advances would be that independent examinations into the technical knowledge of nurses would be instituted, and would gradually be made more searching and severe; and that

not only would nursing certificates in the future be solely gained by the really efficient, but by means of a public register, both the public and the nursing profession, would be protected against the ignorant, inefficient, and untrustworthy person, who at present brings danger to the sick, and discredit upon the whole calling of nursing.

The authorities of the Training Schools for Nurses are clearly realising that for the sake of the inmates of their hospitals, as well as for the welfare of the sick of the richer classes, by whose contributions the hospitals are supported, it is essential that the education of nurses must be conducted upon more systematic, and more thorough, principles than have hitherto been the case. The effect of this upon the *personnel* of the nursing profession must in future be very great, for the obvious reason that a higher standard of general education will almost necessarily be required from those who purpose to become nurses; while, on the other hand, the greater expense to hospitals of the training and board of such probationers, will almost inevitably result in probationers becoming more and more regarded as pupils and less and less treated as servants of the institution. We are well aware that there are some who are unacquainted alike with history, and with the progress of nursing education, who fail to understand this probability, and who consider that the great majority of nurses in the future will be drawn from the working classes. But when the history of medical education is remembered, and the remarkable manner in which history seems to be repeating itself in the case of nursing is observed, it will doubtless be felt that just as the social status of medical practitioners has vastly increased during the last 60 years, so the rapid improvements in the nursing profession, during the past twenty years, only foreshadow still more important developments. It is at least certain that nursing in the future will be regarded, in all its ranks, as a calling worthy to be undertaken chiefly by gentlewomen, and that the improvements which have been made in recent years in the tone, in the discipline, and in the efficiency of hospital nursing, will not only continue, but must tend to increase, in the future.

DISTRICT NURSING.

It is generally stated that the idea of providing skilled nurses for the sick poor in their own homes occurred first to the late Mrs. William Rathbone, the first wife of Mr. William Rathbone, of Liverpool. In the year 1859, during her last illness, this lady was attended by a trained nurse, and she so highly appre-

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