

"Silver Day" at Bellevue.

ON the 6th day of March, 1899, Bellevue Hospital, Mother of American Training Schools, celebrated a most interesting event. Eight hundred trained nurses, drawn from the twenty schools in the enlarged city, were present at a meeting held in the ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria to celebrate the founding, twenty-five years ago, of the Bellevue Training School for Nurses. These eight hundred women, all dressed in the distinctive garb of their vocation, represented the growth of their profession in the quarter-century that had elapsed since the first class of five nurses marked a new departure in the medical history of the United States. While the first school for trained nurses was established only after much difficulty and in the face of great opposition, similar schools are now established all over the country, and are equipping thousands of women yearly for the duties which have made the trained nurse so potent an ally to the physician in the sickroom.

The whole of the spacious floor of the ballroom was devoted to the seating of the nurses, while the boxes were filled by those who have been actively interested in the development of the training schools in this city. Bishop Potter presided and with him on the platform were ex-Governor Levi P. Morton, John W. Keller, president of the City Department of Charities; A. Simis, junr., Charity Commissioner for the Borough of Brooklyn; the Rev. James Le Baron Johnson and Drs. W. Gill Wylie, and William M. Polk, whilst many of the most intellectual women in New York were also present.

The choir of St. Thomas's Church, by which the music was given at the graduation of the first class, rendered the musical part of the celebration, under the direction of the veteran organist, George William Warren.

FOUNDING OF BELLEVUE SCHOOL.

The proceedings were opened with prayer by Bishop Potter, after which the Rev. Mr. Johnson read a history of the founding of the Bellevue school. Part of this review was as follows:

"Twenty-five years ago there were no trained nurses in the United States. In every community there were kind, good women who, from long experience, had learned to care tenderly for the sick. In the villages when there was serious illness the neighbours took turns in watching the sufferers at night, and during the day the different members of the family were taxed to the utmost. On January 26th, 1872, a number of women met at No. 19, West Thirty-first Street, in this city, at the invitation of Miss Louisa Lee Schuyler, to organize a committee to visit the

public hospitals of the city and county of New York, and report upon their condition to the State Board of Charities. Several of the women present had been members of the Sanitary Commission and had had experience in hospital work, but the majority had no knowledge of the difficulties of the task before them, and accepted it with all the bravery of ignorance."

It is doubtful if any work in a country of even such wide philanthropy as this was ever more conscientiously performed than that at Bellevue during the winters of 1873, 1874 and 1875. Sixty among the most intelligent women of the city daily passed hours in its wards, carefully studying its conditions and consulting the highest authorities. As a result of their reports it was decided that no permanent reform could be effected under the actual system of nursing existing.

The nurses appointed by the Commissioners of Charities were ignorant of the most elementary principles of the nursing art, and while some were decent women the larger number were brought from Blackwell's Island, where they had been sent as vagrants or paupers and sometimes prisoners, and many could neither read nor write.

But having decided that a reform in the nursing was imperative as preliminary to a reform in the general system, a sub-committee was appointed to propose a plan for a training school for nurses. This committee, composed of the following women and men, set themselves to this task in the winter of 1873: Mrs. W. H. Osborn (chairman), Mrs. Robert Woodworth (secretary), Mrs. William Preston Griffin, Mrs. D'Oremieulx, Mrs. Joseph Hobson, Miss Woolsey, Miss Ellen Collins, Miss Julia Gould, Henry G. Stebbins (treasurer), Dr. W. Gill Wylie and Chandler Robbins.

DR. WYLIE'S MISSION.

The first step to be taken was to learn what a training school was, and as it was considered important that the information should be obtained at headquarters Dr. W. Gill Wylie, then a house surgeon at Bellevue and one of the first in the profession to assist in the work, offered to go to Europe at his own expenses and bring back a report.

The Committee would be lacking in gratitude if no allusion were made here to the four members of the Medical Board who stood for them in the moments of sore trial and helped them to fight the battle—Dr. James R. Wood, Dr. Austin Flint, Dr. Stephen Smith and Dr. James M. Markoe.

Dr. Wylie returned from Europe in the autumn of 1872, bringing with him an interesting report of the schools in England, France and Germany, and, above all, a letter of encouragement and

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