

did not lie success and advancement, that nurses could not afford to be narrow and self-seeking and that to attain to a fixed high standard in our work, to overcome the evils that were increasing, and to collect our scattered forces, we must have unity of purpose and centralization of means. As an expression of this growing conviction a Congress of Nurses was held in Chicago in 1893. During this meeting a number of Superintendents feeling the obligations resting upon them, either as a reward or penance for being many of them pioneers among nurses, and all of them representing most of the large schools in the country, met together to discuss ways and means by which some of these problems could be met, and some of the evils overcome. This conference resulted in the formation of the American Society of Superintendents of Training Schools for Nurses. Beginning with a membership of 18, the roll gradually increased until now it includes over 100 members, or practically the heads of all the best training schools in the country. During its five years of work it has laboured faithfully to lay a solid foundation upon which a standard for nurses might be built—a standard that all high minded, earnest nurses would be proud to help to maintain and that would attract to the work desirable women. From the first the Society was impressed with the fact that only by the nurses themselves could such a standard be created and sustained, and before anything like a professional status could be hoped for, an *esprit de corps* must be established among graduates of the same school with a drawing together in their own work and home interests. It was felt that this sentiment once actively aroused an interest in the larger affairs and problems of nurses as a class would naturally follow. The fact that in this short time alumnæ have been organized in almost every training school, both large and small, that the Associated Alumnæ is just completing its second year with a membership of 26 alumnæ, representing about 2,500 nurses, and that this year many small general schools will be admitted into associated membership is a convincing proof that trained nurses desire a fixed standard, that they are alive to their responsibilities as professional women, and realize that they have a definite position to maintain. And so we close this brief *résumé* of the first quarter of a century of our history with the knowledge that our chief weakness during these years has come from the rapid increase in numbers, from the want of a professional and educational standard and from the scattering of our forces from lack of organization and of working together in our common interests. But there is nothing to be despondent over and much ground for encouragement. We are fortunate

in having discovered our weakest points at so early a period in our career. Our strength in all that tends towards bettering the work of the trained nurse is in a fair way to increase. If our efforts towards organization are still incomplete a fair beginning has been made and at least we are free from many factions with their working at cross-purposes for which we may be deeply thankful. Steps have been taken to decrease the quantity of graduates as well as to improve the standard by increasing the term of instruction from two to three years. There is also more uniformity in candidates, requirements, and more system in our methods of instruction. "Well begun is half done," and at least we may congratulate ourselves that we have made a good beginning. And now let us turn and look a little way into the future and mark what it may hold for us in the way of new work, responsibilities and obligations. Nor have we far to look, for right on the threshold we are confronted by a problem that holds grave results and responsibilities for trained nurses. In my last year's address I mentioned some of the branches of work in addition to hospital and private nursing that have been opened up to the trained nurse, all evidences of the growing place which the world is ready to give her as she shows her fitness for it. To these was unexpectedly added another in the demand and need for her services during the late war. Last spring, when the possibilities of war menaced the nation, individual nurses expressed their willingness to give their services if needed in the military hospitals, and when war was actually declared, the number of volunteers was greatly increased. But, unfortunately, trained nurses were not the only women thus impelled, for applications and offers to do army nursing began to pour into the Surgeon-General's office from all manner of women, from the well-meaning "born nurse," the enthusiastic patriot, from sisterhoods and from adventuresses, as well as from the cream and slum of trained nurses. Just about this time the Associated Alumnæ was holding its first annual meeting in New York, and one of the first acts its delegates had the privilege of performing was to offer the services of representative trained nurses as a body to the Government to do its army nursing. This step was taken because the delegates were fully impressed with the fact that nursing in the army is of the greatest importance to the country and that here, if anywhere, incompetence and want of system would be productive of the greatest harm not only in the immediate present but for the future of many valuable lives. You all know how nobly our volunteer forces behaved, but the back bone of our military and naval resources lay in the trained

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)