

The American Nursing World.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.*

BY MRS. HAMPTON ROBB.

WE consider Mrs. Hampton Robb's address, as President, to the National Associated Alumnae of Trained Nurses of the United States, so important that we have printed it in full. We hope nurses in this country will carefully read Mrs. Robb's remarks on State Registration for their profession, and note how the leaders in the nursing world in America are becoming convinced of the necessity for this measure.

ONLY once during the twelve months is it our privilege to meet together as a corporate body to deal with the common affairs of our work, to take counsel, as wisely as we may, how we may improve and further that work by mutual and organized efforts, and at the same time strengthen those ties which bind us together as individual workers and as members of a profession, which in a little over twenty-five years has grown, as it were, from a small seed to a mighty tree whose branches spread widely and in many directions. To this yearly gathering also are brought the suggestions of individual members and of individual alumnae associations to receive the consideration and attention of the representatives of the whole body, who deliberate upon them and take such action as seems best. The result of these deliberations, together with the substance of the papers read and of the ensuing discussions, are reported to the several alumnae by their delegates, and moreover are printed in detail in the annual report, which is circulated through the proper channels, so that it comes within the reach of even the most remote member, supplying her, we trust, with fresh food for thought and a new stimulus for the work of the next year.

It would seem, therefore, advisable that we should make use of this annual opportunity to hold a general review of our forces, so that utilizing what we can learn from the retrospect we may be the better able to deal with the present and receive a clearer understanding as regards the future. Our looking backward does not as yet give us much ground to cover, since this is only the third time we have met together, and our combined deliberations cover only two years of work. But even in this short time we have been brought face to face with circumstances which are of deep import to all nurses, and which have caused the need for concentrated interest and work to be keenly felt. To those

* Being the Address to the National Associated Alumnae of the United States for 1900.

of our members to whom the benefits to be derived from organization were perhaps not yet clear; I feel sure that certain events of the past two years have shown the imperative need for organization, so that I trust that this question may be regarded as permanently settled. Indeed to our cost we now know that the concentration of our forces came too late by at least a year, for one can hardly doubt that the nursing of our soldiers during the Spanish-American war would naturally have fallen into our hands, had our professional organization been completed earlier. If this had been done, our capacity to meet properly so important a crisis would have been better understood and appreciated, with the result that not only would our soldiers have received better nursing, but we ourselves might have been spared the extra exertion that has been demanded of us during the past two years in our continued efforts in supporting the Army Nursing Bill, and at the same time upholding the honour of our professional status. It may be, however, as well that we were not successful to begin with, for had honours come to us too easily, they might possibly have rendered us careless of our best interests in the future, and the necessity for absolute loyalty and continued personal effort might not have been so early impressed upon our minds with sufficient emphasis. Be that as it may, the events of the past year have made even the doubters among us realize that, in a certain sense, the trained nurse as a unit is nobody; and although at this writing the success or failure of the Army Nursing Bill is still undecided we may still feel that, whether we win or lose the cause for this year, we should be deeply grateful that we were a sufficiently organized and representative body to be able to unite in working to uphold and guard our professional honour and its welfare.

In other ways also, there has been a closer drawing together and a broader outlook developed, chiefly through the efforts of our Educational Committee. For the purpose of education in various cities, alumnae members of different schools have met together, and, in accordance with the programme submitted by the Educational Committee, courses of lectures and talks on various topics have been arranged and well attended meetings have been held at the various alumnae club rooms. Incidentally this exchange of alumnae courtesies has been the means of stirring up a considerable pride and ambition in individual school alumnae, and as a result new club houses have been established. These meetings may also be regarded as the forerunners of the local clubs which we shall hope to see begun in the near future.

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