

Professional Review.**CONSIDERATIONS SUR LES INFIRMIÈRES
DES HÔPITEAUX.***BY ANNA EMILIE HAMILTON,
Doctor of Medicine.

The Thesis for the M.D. degree, under the above title, publicly presented by Dr. Anna Hamilton to the Faculty of Medicine at Montpellier, in June of last year, is a most interesting and valuable addition to nursing literature, indeed it is doubtful if so exhaustive a history of nursing has ever before been issued. It deals primarily with the present conditions of nursing in France, but also gives a survey of those which obtain in other countries, and it is satisfactory to find that, in spite of all the imperfections of which we British nurses are conscious, Dr. Hamilton has a very high idea of the standard of nursing in this country, as also of that in America, and frequently refers to it as a model to be aimed at. Nurses of all nations must be greatly indebted to the author for the laborious and painstaking inquiry into the conditions of their profession and should carefully study this Thesis. It is so seldom that a member of the medical profession, which is intimately concerned in the efficiency of nursing education, takes the trouble to enquire into the prevalent methods and standards of nurse training schools that we can hardly give too warm a welcome to this Thesis, for it is only when medicine and nursing, hand in hand, efficiently work together for the common good that the best results will be obtained, the two professions are so closely allied that any failure or short-coming in the organization of either must act prejudicially upon the other, and consequently upon the efficient care of the sick.

The pictures with which this Thesis is illustrated, are very interesting and give a glimpse into the conditions which prevailed in olden times, as well as at present, in hospitals at home and abroad. The work is divided into seven sections: 1. Historical. 2. The Religious Orders. 3. Different Schools. 4. Conditions of Nursing in Paris. 5. (a) Florence Nightingale; (b) Trained Nurses. 6. The Red Cross Societies. 7. The Evolution and General Management of Hospitals.

The investigation required into all these points has involved a large amount of labour, and the facts disclosed have aroused much discussion and criticism. If out of these the truth is driven home that the nursing schools of France need to be re-organized, as our own were half a century ago by earnest and devoted women, Dr. Hamilton will have done good service in the cause of humanity. That the information she required has not always been placed at the author's disposal we gather from the preface, in which she tells us:—"This work has not been easy, for accurate information has been impossible of attainment. Red tape, rivalry, prejudice, misunderstanding, have constantly stood in the way of investigation, and compel the presentation to-day of a study far removed from the model originally conceived." Human nature is much the same all the world over, and there are no greater enemies of progress and reform than ignorance, conservatism, prejudice, and vested interests.

HISTORICAL SECTION.

The author points out that although the first hospitals in Europe were not organized until the fourth century, the care of the sick was recognised as a duty long before that date. A law existed among the Egyptians

which obliged the rich to succour the necessitous who were dangerously ill under pain of being themselves assassinated. This was an advance on the practices of the Jews who regarded the sick as unclean, the Babylonians who publicly exposed them, the Greeks who considered them useless members of society who might advantageously die, and of the Romans who placed their sick slaves on an island in the Tiber to die without any alleviation of their sufferings.

Among the ancients, however, the sick who were abandoned by their relatives appealed to the gods, and the priests were not slow to use this credulity to their own ends, hence about 770 B.C. we find temples of Esculapius, god of medicine, established. In India, the king, Duttha Gamani, who died 161 B.C. founded 18 different hospitals, and the father of medicine, Hippocrates, born 460 years B.C. regarded the assistant (presumably the equivalent of the modern nurse) as the co-operator of the medical man, and was also full of consideration for the sick, and opposed their useless exposure during examinations and operations.

THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS.

After the establishment of the Christian era many hospitals were founded, the care of which was for the most part entrusted to religious orders. This was not, however, found to be in all cases satisfactory. For instance we read with regard to the Hôtel Dieu at Paris in 1559 that the patients were so badly treated that many sick objected to enter the institution, and shortly afterwards that the nuns, who were too many in number, neglected the sick and spent their time in meditation instead of performing their duty. Small wonder that the sick objected to be taken to the Hôtel Dieu, for we read that they were placed promiscuously in beds, reeking with infection, sometimes eight in a bed. The mortality amongst lying-in women was 7 in 100, while at the same time it was 2 in 100 in London Hospitals. The foundation of an Order of Sisters by St. Vincent de Paul inaugurated a system of nursing the sick much in advance of any then existing. For instance, one injunction which he gave to the Sisters was as follows "you must apportion your time so that you will never devote it to prayer when the sick need your attention." But even this Sisterhood, broad-minded as was its founder, refuse to attend to all sick persons without distinction, and in their agreements with the administrative bodies of hospitals the following clause is always to be found. "The Sisters will not undertake the care of girls of bad life, nor of women suffering from diseases produced by their own fault, nor of lying-in women." Neither are they permitted to dress children of the male sex.

The above regulation is quite enough to disqualify these Sisters from undertaking nursing duties. The true spirit of nursing involves the willingness to care for all patients without distinction, the need, not the character, of the sick man or woman being the only passport required. If it be urged that the care of the unworthy entails some danger of deterioration of character to the attendant, which we do not believe, who should be so fit to undertake these duties as sisters, fortified by the power of their religion.

LABORE EST ORARE.

Another objection to placing the sick in the care of these Sisters is that they live in the convent, a distinct section of the hospital to which all retire at the same time for their meals, and they leave the sick to the care of subordinates daily from 12 to 3 during their recreation; night duty is also arranged for in the

* Montpellier. Imprimerie Centrale du Midi. (Hamelin Frères.)

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