

The American Nursing World.

REORGANISATION OF BELLEVUE AND ALLIED HOSPITALS.

The first report of the recently-appointed trustees of the above public institutions was handed in for the consideration of the Mayor of New York on July 1st. The fact that these hospitals are in few respects fitted for the work for which they were established has not only been notorious for a considerable period, but for the past two or three years has been widely advertised in journals, both lay and medical. The *Medical Record* has been prominent in making public the conditions prevailing in Bellevue Hospital, and has been especially energetic in the demand that it and its allied hospitals should be placed as quickly as possible upon a proper footing.

The appointment of a Board of Trustees composed of honourable and trustworthy citizens—whose president, a physician of high repute and wide experience qualifies him for the position—is a step in the right direction, and may be taken as an earnest that radical reforms will be introduced, and that the public hospitals of New York City in place of being a reproach will become a credit to the metropolis of the United States.

In regard to Bellevue Hospital the report says: "Some of the unfavourable conditions we have been able to improve; others, in spite of all our efforts, remain practically unchanged. They can only be remedied, in our opinion, by the erection of an entirely new hospital in place of the collection of buildings that has borne that name for so many years. The main structure, which contains 718 of the 939 beds of the whole hospital, was erected in 1817, eighty-five years ago. It was used as an almshouse until 1846, when the paupers were transferred to new buildings especially planned for them on Blackwell's Island, leaving the old buildings to serve as the chief public hospital of New York City. This it has done to this day, and has never been remodelled nor substantially altered from its original design. All the patients must still be received and examined in the one room in the basement, with its poor light and bad ventilation.

"There are between eighty and 100 applicants for admission a day, and men, women and children are received into the same room, there being no other available. All varieties of disease and injury follow each other in rapid succession throughout the day and night, and patients must often be transferred to the wards before a proper diagnosis can be made. During the past five months upwards of 4,118 ambulance cases alone were brought to the door of this room. Here may be seen the very sick, the intoxicated, the insane, and even those who have been fatally injured.

"Under such conditions the quiet and privacy

necessary for a proper and thorough examination are impossible."

Reference is made to the insufficiency of the accommodation of the house staff, there being but sixteen rooms for the forty-three physicians, and to the extremely bad conditions which exist in the quarters provided for the employees. The pay, too, of the "hospital helpers" is shown to be wretchedly inadequate, the result being that the class of help obtained is, as a rule, inefficient and untrustworthy, and is responsible for many of the scandals that have occurred in the institution during the past few years.

The Board of Trustees, feeling the need of more expert observation, called to their aid several of the other departments of the city, namely, the Bureau of Buildings, the Fire Department, the Department of Health, and finally the New York Board of Fire Underwriters. These reports are given with that of the Board of Trustees, and afford further and conclusive evidence of the pressing need of immediate and radical reform in the management and construction of Bellevue and its sister hospitals.

REORGANISATION OF THE NURSING DEPARTMENT.

The administrative changes of note which have been undertaken by the Board of Trustees are the reorganisation of the nursing service and changes in the pavilion for the insane. The responsibility for the nursing of patients in Bellevue Hospital has been hitherto divided between two schools, the New York Training School for Women Nurses and the Mills' Training School for Male Nurses. The former has had charge of the wards for women and children, and the latter school the wards for the men. The two schools are entirely independent of each other, and each has its own superintendent. This arrangement is peculiar to Bellevue, and has been the source of some of the many evils that have afflicted this hospital. In the other hospitals all the patients, men and women, are nursed by women, men being employed in the male wards simply as orderlies to assist in the heavier work. In Bellevue the men's wards have been utilised to train male nurses, no women entering them, except the superintendent of the school. In this the Board consider that the hospital has rendered a service to the public, but has not been quite just to its own patients. The Board believe, as do the Medical Board of Bellevue Hospital and the New York County Visiting Committee of the State Charities Aid Association, that there should be a woman head nurse in charge of every ward in the hospital—except in certain wards—with one or more male nurses under her in the male wards to do such work as is too heavy for women or as can more properly be done by men. These male nurses should receive training as at present, but to secure the best possible nursing service in a ward it is

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