

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 746.

SATURDAY, JULY 19, 1902.

Vol. XXIX.

Editorial.

SCHOOL NURSES.

The Board School nurse is an admirable illustration of the development which has taken place in the humanitarianism of this country during recent years; and also of the reason thereof. Before 1832, the State concerned itself but little with the care of the helpless. Those who could fight for themselves, those who could give or control a vote for a Parliamentary representative, were able to secure some influence in legislation. But if they had no votes, and could therefore bring no direct pressure to bear in the political world, they were powerless to effect any reform in which they were interested, however national its character or however urgently it might be required. Consequently, the Reform Acts, by widening the basis of representation in this country, have had an immense effect upon legislation. So much so, indeed, that it is now a common cry that the Parliamentary machine is choked with the work it attempts to accomplish. Whereas, in former days, each member of the House of Commons possessed only a few constituents, who gave him little or no Parliamentary trouble, so that he could regard the House of Commons as it was then described—as “the most agreeable club in London,” and his sole duty therein to vote as his party whips directed; now, in every constituency, there are societies of all sorts for protecting children, for protecting animals and for reforming every kind and manner of abuse. To every one of these Societies, the member for the constituency is compelled to give more or less deference, simply because everyone can influence a certain number of votes at the next election. Consequently, there are few Members of Parliament at the present day who are not personally pledged, either themselves to introduce, or to give their active support to, reforms in which their constituents are interested. Our point is that Parliament thus reflects, not only the constantly growing power of the

democracy, but the increasing humanitarian instincts of the people. For example, the Education Act of 1870 for the first time gave the country at large universal education. The results are appreciated now by all classes, because, as might have been expected, the more free development of the intellectual faculties of the nation has inevitably decreased the effects of ignorance and vice, and has therefore led to a continual diminution in the criminal statistics of the country. One of the great developments of the educational system has not unnaturally been that the children of the commonwealth have become, to an ever-increasing extent, regarded as the wards of the State; and, from time to time, this has caused fresh developments for their care and maintenance. Years ago, it was found that hundreds of the children went hungry to school in the morning, and so the system of “free breakfasts” was initiated. A little later, and the health of the growing population was found to require attention; and specialists have since been appointed to attend to their teeth, their eyes, and their hearing. The development of the School-Nurse system was therefore a natural outcome of the same process. The London School Nurses’ Society, founded in 1898, was started in a very modest manner. The School Management Committee of the Board gave its consent to a nurse from the Society “attending each morning for one hour and a half to dress the eyes and sores of the children” in those schools in which the local members considered such a course advisable. But the Board declined to be liable for any of the cost except that, as a great concession, the Board consented “to provide a basin and kettle for the use of a nurse” at any such school “at a cost of three shillings for the two articles.”

The system, however, has worked remarkably well; its good effects are now universally recognised; and there is little doubt that the principle will in due course become universally accepted by the School Boards throughout the United Kingdom.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)