

## Nursing in Jamaica, British West Indies.

By MINNIE SCOVILLE BROWN.

In the investigation of this subject much careful attention was given to details on all sides. The hospitals at Kingston, Jamaica, are the headquarters for all the training obtainable for nurses on the island. Here we found both the Public Hospital and the Jubilee Lying-in Hospital doing very commendable work with the means at hand, the staff of physicians and surgeons being thoroughly educated, efficient, "up-to-date" men. The buildings, although meagrely equipped and undergoing a series of repairs and changes, were admirably planned for the work undertaken. The long, well-lighted open-air wards, with their rows of cots, numerous baths, and excellent modern sanitation, give the natural requisites for typical nursing. But, sad to relate, there is but one thoroughly trained nurse on the entire island, and she is only partially appreciated and restricted by limited means and meagre support. To her indefatigable labours, through long years, is entirely due the present creditable system of training in obstetrics, which compares very favourably with the modern lying-in hospital in our own city.

The Victoria Jubilee Hospital was established in 1892, in commemoration of the Queen's Jubilee, the citizens donating the sum of £400 as their offering, in addition to the sum allotted them by the Government. Here Miss Davis, a graduate of the Whitechapel Training School, London, was installed (with four pupil nurses) as Matron, Superintendent of Nurses, and anything else that might appear in the manifold duties which are necessarily included in pioneer hospital work.

The buildings themselves are attractive, clean, and fairly well equipped, save in the culinary department, which is still distinctly native, except by Miss Davis's supervision. It is clean and wholesome, even in its primitive state. Yet from it is served better food, in larger quantities, than the majority of the patients have ever before known.

At the present time the hospital contains twenty-four beds for lying-in patients, whose average period of accouchement is ten days.

A delivery room is equipped with bed, medicine chest (well supplied), and modern appliances for local treatment. A lavatory with excellent sanitation adjoins, while a cosy nursery supplements the ward work. An average of four patients per diem are accouched, the service being excellent on account of the nature of the cases.

To fully appreciate the character of the work it must be understood that two-thirds of the inhabitants are untutored black natives, who have no conception of morality or honesty in any degree; also that 80 per cent. of the births are of illegiti-

mate origin. In this condition of affairs it must necessarily follow that specific diseases in all their polluting varieties afford a large field of experience, as there are practically no "clean" cases in the hospital domain, even in those cases legitimatised by matrimony.

During the winter months the patients are, in addition to the specific contaminations, particularly susceptible to uremia, although rarely of a fatal nature.

No sterilisation is observed, except for instruments, yet simple surgical cleanliness is rigidly adhered to and the extremely low mortality rate (seven deaths during the year of 1902) from seven hundred and eighty-five (785) cases treated under the existing circumstances is a powerful argument for its efficiency, although it seriously disturbs our theory of the necessity for modern sterilisation. General treatment and care of patients are otherwise very similar to the methods employed in our own hospitals.

A training-school of ten pupils are given one year's training; longer time if necessary to accomplish the required course, no diploma being given except to those who creditably acquit themselves, a fact well worthy of observation.

Two graduate nurses are employed, one as assistant superintendent and one in charge of ward work, day and night work being alternate weekly.

Weekly lectures are provided by the attending medical officers; supplementary instruction in theory and practice of obstetrical nursing is given by the superintendent of nurses; thereby supplying the people of Jamaica with the only reliable nursing assistance, although their experience is limited to the one branch, and their efficiency thereby circumscribed.

In the Public Hospital we find a greater field for criticism. Here the work, of course, is of the same character in all its diversified forms, and for experience certainly no one could select a field of greater value.

The nurses themselves are of desirable character and qualifications, being naturally neat, attractive, of quick perception, respectful, obedient, and observant. But, unfortunately, the training-school in connection is a misnomer and a harmful factor by its misleading supposition that it qualifies its pupils for public service or private duty.

Unfortunately, this department is under the supervision of the Deaconess' Home. I say unfortunately, because the good Sisters are unquestionably sincerely loyal in every way, and have accomplished much praiseworthy work in other lines, yet they are thoroughly incompetent to judge of the requirements and efficiency of the necessary training for their pupils, although, under the supervision of the medical officers, the two wards under their control are the best equipped in the house. As a result a pitiable state exists. The

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