

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 834.

SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 1904.

Vol. XXXII.

Editorial.

A PROPHECIC INSIGHT.

The splendid gift of Sir Donald Currie to University College Hospital of £100,000 must not be estimated only by its monetary value, welcome as it is from that aspect. It means also that a member of the wealthy public has realised the value of a scientific basis in medical and nursing work, and the necessity for the liberal endowment of educational courses, if these are to be organised on the best lines. Indeed, a prophetic insight into the needs of the future is shown in this gift.

In past centuries the care of the sick was effected by the philanthropic method. Liberal gifts were made by the charitable for their maintenance in hospitals, and the personal service of the devout, often given gratuitously, enabled them to be tended in the cheapest possible form. But, immediately it was realised that the only lines upon which the advancement of medicine and nursing was possible were those founded on science, there arose at once the necessity for increased educational facilities, and education when efficient is a costly matter. If proof is needed, the cost of maintenance of our great universities and their liberal endowments may be instanced.

Of late years the medical and nursing schools of our hospitals, which are practically colleges of medicine and nursing, have been struggling to bring their curricula into accord with the demands of modern science. Their efforts have, however, been crippled by the lack of the funds necessary to perfect their system.

Thus, on the one hand has been the desire of the teachers in these schools to improve the educational curriculum, and, on the other, the reluctance of committees to meet the growing demands which these branches make upon the general funds. And, while their efficiency is essential to that of the institution as a whole, this reluctance is dictated by a right

instinct, for the gifts of the public to hospitals are mainly subscribed by philanthropic persons for the support of the sick poor, and not for the endowment of expensive schemes for the improvement of medical and nursing education, however desirable, and even necessary, these schemes may be. In proof of this, we may note that only recently the donor of a large sum to the King's Hospital Fund expressed the hope that no portion of the funds subscribed for the relief of the sick poor would be diverted to purposes of medical education.

Nevertheless, the needs of education are urgent, and it is to be hoped that those members of the public who are interested in its improvement will realise that if we are to keep pace in this country with the advances of Germany and the United States, large sums must be contributed to endow systematic scientific courses both in medicine and nursing.

Further, the more the theoretical instruction in both these branches is carried on outside the hospitals the better. They have enough to do in providing clinical facilities, in perfecting their pupils in practical work and technical methods, and in training them to a high sense of their professional duty and responsibility. It will be well when some millionaire, following the example of the far-sighted munificence of Sir Donald Currie, puts down £100,000 to endow schools of nursing where women can be thoroughly grounded in the theory of their future work preparatory to entering hospital wards for their practical training. In the expenditure of the £20,000 given by Sir Donald Currie for the Nurses' Home in connection with University College Hospital, we hope that this Home will be organised on a collegiate foundation, so that the pupils of the nursing school may have facilities given them for passing through a comprehensive educational curriculum which will fit them to take their part in progressing side by side with scientific medicine.

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