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Editorial.

THE PROGRESS OF DISTRICT NURSING.

The care of the poor in their own homes is a branch of nursing which has always been attractive to nurses with a genuine love of humanity, and since the organisation of district nursing under Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses, connection with which implies a recognised and honorable status, its popularity has undoubtedly increased, while its usefulness as a factor in social progress, and in the amelioration of the conditions of life amongst the poor, is difficult to estimate.

Like many movements which have ultimately taken deep root in the hearts and minds of the people, the first attempts at district nursing were small and unostentatious. In 1848, St. John's House, London, was founded, its second object being "To co-operate with the Medical Officers of Dispensaries, and aid them in the visitation of their patients." In 1857, the Biblewomen and Nurses' Mission was founded by Mrs. Ranyard, and in 1859, just fifty years ago, the late Mr. William Rathbone, of Liverpool, who had experienced the comfort of nursing in his home during the last illness of his wife, generously provided a nurse for work in the homes of the poor, in order that the benefit which he had received might be extended to those less happily circumstanced. The work has prospered and extended until this month a Congress is to be held in Liverpool to commemorate the foundation of district nursing in that city, which will be attended by a member of the Royal Family—Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll—and by delegates from many parts of the world, and which will be addressed by such experts as Miss Amy Hughes, General Superintendent of Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses—the

Roll of which includes thousands of highly trained nurses—Miss L. Wuld, Founder of the Nurses' Settlement, New York, Miss Rosalind Paget, and delegates from Sweden, Holland, Norway, and elsewhere. The seed sown fifty years ago has grown and fructified, so that it is impossible to estimate the extent of its influence.

The great attraction of district nursing is to be found in its far reaching character as well as because so much depends upon the individual worker. In institutions the almost military discipline tends to efface personality in all but the strongest characters, but in district nursing the scope of the nurse is very much what she herself makes it. She comes into direct personal contact with the many social problems which intimately affect the poor, as well as with her own special work of nursing the sick, and she gets into touch with the various agencies working for the betterment of their condition. In hospitals she sees them taken out of their own environment, and placed in the best possible conditions for recovery in a time of acute illness, but, for those who really love the poor, there is a fascination in knowing them and working for them under normal conditions, and the benefits of the close contact which results are not all on one side.

The nurse, by practice and precept, teaches cleanliness, sanitation, thrift, and other virtues tending to raise the standard of national life to a degree unknown before, while she in return constantly receives lessons in patience, unselfishness, and generosity, for generosity is a virtue which thrives amongst those who have themselves felt the bitter pinch of poverty.

It follows that as the influence of the district nurse as a social worker is so far reaching, that the conditions of work and pay should be such as to attract the highest

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