

International Congress of Nurses.

THURSDAY, JULY 22nd.

10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

THE CARE OF THE INSANE.

MRS. HAMPTON ROBB, who presided over the Session on the Care of the Insane, said the branch of nursing which was under consideration was one which had not yet received the attention to which it was entitled from the general nurse, and was perhaps the most important branch of all. Florence Nightingale had called nursing almost the finest of fine arts. If so then the care of the insane should call forth the finest art of which we are capable. To care for diseases of the body was mere child's play compared with the care of the diseased mind. Since nurses had been organised in America they had discussed the care of the insane in a tentative way, but had never taken any definite steps to bring the general nurse into closer contact with mental nursing. One woman amongst them had made it a speciality, and that was Miss Linda Richards, a woman they delighted to honour. She was the oldest trained nurse in America, and had always stood for what was highest and best. For many years past Miss Richards had made it her task to take charge of pioneer work in various insane asylums in the United States, in order to break the ground, and in course of time she hoped the general nurse would take up this branch of the profession. She commenced this special work in the Eastern States, and then went West, and was now in Michigan, where they hoped that in the near future her efforts would be crowned with success. Many things were forcing the attention of nurses to the care of the insane at the present time. One in the United States had been Registration. In the States where Registration obtained the question of examination came up, and the nurses in hospitals and asylums for the insane could only be regarded as specialists, and could not qualify for the regular examinations; they required further general training. That arrested the attention of the authorities in the asylums for the insane, and they brought the whole subject before their committee, when it was realised that special steps must be taken to provide further training for the women who were caring for their patients. At the meeting of the National Associated Alumnae at Minnesota in June last a session was devoted to the nursing of the insane, with the result that a special committee was appointed to consider this very important question, so that in June, 1910, at the next meeting in New York, it was to be hoped, when the committee had presented its report,

that some really practical plan might be adopted.

A difficulty to be faced was that of finding the right kind of woman to take up this great speciality. In talking to nurses privately in the United States, and in watching the condition of mind of individual nurses, they did not find that the individual woman's desire was in the direction of mental nursing, but they were hopeful that by putting the subject to her in the right kind of way, by educating her up to her responsibilities, it would be possible in course of time—and she hoped a very short time—to convince her that one of her highest duties lay within the walls of hospitals for the insane.

Sad to say, insanity was constantly on the increase in the United States of America, and, that being so, there was something wrong with the work of nurses if they were taking no steps to stem the tide. Mrs. Robb hoped there would be a good discussion that morning. She then introduced Dr. Robert Jones to the meeting as an expert on the subject of insanity, the Resident Physician and Superintendent at Claybury Asylum, which represented the best in the care of the insane, and lecturer on mental diseases in the medical school at St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

THE CARE OF THE INSANE.

DR. ROBERT JONES, after referring to the large number of representatives present from foreign countries, said it was a great honour to be called upon to address the International Congress of Nurses, and it was consistent with modern views that the Congress should devote a session to the care of the insane, for in no department of medicine had progress been more active during the Victorian Era—indeed, revolutionary would not be too strong a term—than in the treatment of insanity. The history of this improvement had been the history of nursing, and the confidence in institutions for the insane enjoyed to-day was directly due to a greater knowledge of the nurses' duties, to skill in applying these, and to the disposition to treat those suffering from mental infirmity with tenderness, which nurses themselves had imparted into their work.

In connection with the "non-restraint" system in the care of the insane, the lecturer mentioned first the high-minded, self-denying, and philanthropic devotion of Pinel, who in 1792 originated it. France would ever rank as the first country to accept and advocate the enlightened treatment which is the boast of medical psychology to-day. Other notable names mentioned in this connection were those of Esquiroll, Pinel's receptive pupil; Heinroth and Grissinger, in Germany; Drs. Rush, Woodward, and Bell, of Brigham, Curwen, Howe, and Isaac Ray; and no less honoured the great name of Miss Dorothea Dix, who consecrated the best years of her life to the cause of the insane, and, to whose exertions and self-denying devotion some of the

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