

patient, and still earlier when lunatics were chained, and even burnt or beaten to death, we must grant a striking contrast with present conditions. But great progress was still necessary; educated women must be won over to asylum nursing, but while the most progressive men called for the help of the mentally trained and thoughtful women, probably the greater number of asylum doctors still preferred simple, good-natured, robust, country girls as nurses for the insane.

While some of the modern generation of women physically not very resistant, and with weak, nervous systems, were not adapted for this difficult work, others often showed a peculiar interest in, and a special talent for, the care of insane patients. Of the members of the German Nurses' Association, now numbering over 2,000, 38 were at work in sanatoria for nerve cases, and 24 in asylums for the insane. In the nerve sanatoria 13 of these were Lady Superintendents and 9 Head Sisters, and in the asylums 10 were Lady Superintendents and 11 Head Sisters. Compared with the number of sisters engaged in general nursing this proportion was infinitesimal.

The number of insane persons in Germany was estimated at, at least, 120,000, and certainly 7,500 women nurses were needed to care for them. Not a thirtieth part of these belonged to the higher social classes. This, however, was not surprising when asylum conditions were investigated. In the east of Germany salaries began at 226 marks a year (a mark being the equivalent of an English shilling), and only after a very long period of service did the highest salary amount to 600 marks, with the prospect of a pension. In the west, conditions were more favourable. One institution in Baden paid the Lady Superintendent, who had held her position for 20 years, a salary of 1,500 marks, but this was quite exceptional. It was, however, anticipated that both material and social improvement in the condition of asylum nursing and nurses would result from the Act for the State Examination of Nurses.

In Government asylums the work was, as a rule, well regulated, but in private asylums it was often incredibly heavy. In future a training in general nursing ought to be demanded as the foundation of asylum nursing, to which should be added special training in psychical nursing, followed by examination.

If the State could ever afford to pay this debt to civilisation it would probably mean a chance of recovery for many thousands now vegetating in asylums for want of suitable nursing.

#### THE EFFECT OF STATE REGISTRATION OF NURSES ON THE HOSPITALS FOR THE INSANE.

The next speaker was MISS SOPHIA F. PALMER, R.N., Editor of the *American Journal of Nursing*, who gave an interesting account of the effect of Registration in America on hospitals for the insane. Miss Palmer explained that she was President of the Board of Nurse Examiners in New York State during the first four years of the constructive period of State Registration in America, and one of the first and most difficult problems with which the Board had to deal was the recognition of

training schools connected with hospitals for the insane, and the basis upon which this recognition should be accorded in the administration of the law. They were, in a certain sense, special hospitals, but there was a clause in the New York Bill which gave the Board power to recognise them provided they complied with certain conditions, and the Board, feeling their very grave responsibility in this matter, met in conference the officers of the Education Department and representatives from State hospitals, to decide upon the conditions on which graduates from the State Training Schools should be recognised. They found the authorities of the State hospitals rather inclined to think they should be given full recognition without changing their conditions, but they Board had a strong ally in Dr. Russell, the State Inspector of Hospitals for the Insane, who, from the beginning, had taken the stand that the State hospitals, to secure full recognition, must broaden their training, and add to it in certain directions, not only that their nurses might be graduated and registered under the requirements, but also that the nursing of the insane in institutions might be improved; and so, not knowing what the outcome would be, they stood firm for fundamental principles. Once or twice the situation was very critical, and it was a question whether the nursing schools connected with the insane hospitals would register or would stand apart, and refuse to avail themselves of the privileges of State Registration. Some concessions were made to these schools, the greatest being that the valuable experience in the care of the insane should be substituted for practical experience in the care of sick children usually demanded. As a result of their recognition by the State these schools were sending their students for general training, for special instruction in obstetrics, and to other hospitals in which they could obtain experience in different branches. The difficulty was there were not at present sufficient facilities for special training to meet all the demands of the State Board of Nurse Examiners, but they were gradually being developed, and one of the great effects of registration was the development and use of facilities which had been going to waste. The whole nursing body was benefiting by it, and the care both of the insane and the sick was becoming more efficient.

Miss Palmer said that one of the last vacancies occurring, before her retirement, on the Board of Nurse Examiners was filled by a graduate of a general hospital, a very gifted woman, who had been specialising as a Matron in insane hospitals for fifteen years or more. She was closely in touch with the progress, the defects, and the needs of the hospitals for the insane, and through her recognition by the State as an examiner, had become very influential in developing the care of the insane, as well as in bringing the interests of the general hospital schools, and those of hospitals for the insane, into close touch.

The PRESIDENT OF THE SESSION then notified that the discussion was open, and invited questions.

MISS GOODRICH asked Dr. Jones what was the experience of English hospitals for the insane as to

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)