

An International Education Standard for Nurses.*

A PROMISE REDEEMED.

By MRS. ISABEL HAMPTON ROBB.

To redeem a promise made some two years ago, and as a peg upon which I hope may be hung a discussion whose ultimate outcome may be the appointment of an International Education Committee, I beg to offer a few brief suggestions on the need of an International Educational Standard for Nurses. Of the honour that you have done me in permitting me to present this subject I am deeply sensible.

While attending the special meetings of the International Council in Paris, and while listening to the papers and discussions on the various problems connected with nursing, both public and private, I was naturally at once struck by the fact that speakers and listeners were handicapped because they had difficulty in understanding the various foreign languages. But later on it became evident to me that we were still more seriously hampered by the lack of a common nursing language. I mean by this that the methods and ways of regarding nursing problems were in many respects as foreign to the various delegations as were the actual languages. And the thought occurred to me that if we ever hoped to gain any marked definite good and advancement from these international gatherings, if we hoped ever to actually realise the aims of the International Council, one of which is "to confer upon questions relating to the welfare of their patients," sooner or later we must put ourselves upon a common nursing basis, and work out what may be termed a nursing Esperanto, which would in the course of time give us a universal nursing language and universal nursing methods for all of our affiliated countries.

Carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment and the inspiration of the occasion, I expressed to Mrs. Fenwick my belief in the necessity of working upon nursing education and advancement from an international standpoint. My enthusiasm carried me still further, and led me to promise to write a paper on the subject for the next meeting, two years later.

The two years have slipped away all too rapidly, and I regret to say that the ideas and reasons that came to me so readily in Paris have for the most part remained there, so far as I am concerned, so that to-day I can only present some of the bald facts as they occur to me now.

One afternoon during the Paris meeting the

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hospitality of the old Salpêtrière Hospital was extended to us, and upon entering the grounds the first object to attract one's attention was a large building of stone off to the left of the entrance, which bore upon its façade in large letters, "College for Nurses." Instantly the thought came, what a pity it was that we of the older nursing institutions were not prepared with a standard of education worthy of adoption that would make this young college one in very truth. It is deplorable to find that as modern nursing is being adopted by first one country and then another, it has to be started in a more or less haphazard way, instead of each being able to adopt from the very beginning a common standard and common ideas.

It has become an accepted maxim that in the proper education and practical training of the nurse lies in the main the patient's best welfare.

PRACTICAL TRAINING.

I should like to lay especial emphasis upon the words *practical training*. In the making of a nurse throughout all its varied phases, it is necessary to keep very close to the true meaning of these words, for in them lies the true definition of an educational standard. The word education has little significance unless combined with these three all-important words, *proper practical training*. There can be no question but that nursing in itself is an art that should admit of only one way of caring for sick people—the right way; not a half dozen right ways, not one peculiar to Great Britain, Germany, America, or any other country way, but the right way for all; and to actually find this right way and to put it into daily and hourly practice the world over, should be at the very basis of all our nursing organisations and should be the fundamental reason for their existence. Science and art, law and medicine, religion and literature may differ widely in their beliefs, methods, and ideals, but nursing is an art that should be cosmopolitan—practically the same all the world over. In its practice it is without creed or country, governed by the same law for rich and poor—for all alike its motto is the golden rule. But as a matter of fact, each country, even each hospital and school, has its own so considered right way, and so varied may these ways be that it is with difficulty that they are adjusted to fit each other when need arises. So varied indeed are our individual conceptions of the fundamental principles and practice of this nursing work that it is not unusual to find ourselves speaking different languages, as it were, on the same subject. As an instance, in a State report presented before the American Society of Superintendents last year, stress

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