

There are professors in all these schools who give general instruction to the students. The students have to follow a course lasting three years, and at the end of each year they pass an examination. At the termination of the third year they must pass an examination before a Board consisting of physicians, professors of the National School of Medicine in Havana, and they receive their diplomas issued by the Rector of the University and by the Dean of the Medical Faculty.

These schools, although they are all supported by the State, have distinct uniforms, and till very recently the graduates have received medals which indicate the particular school from which they have graduated. The present Secretary of Health and Charities of Cuba, Dr. Matías Duque, intends to provide a single uniform for all the schools, and has already adopted a single distinctive medal alike for all the schools, which is the one I wear. It is a silver medal with a blue enamelled cross, and around the cross the legend, "República de Cuba. Beneficencia."

The nurses receive during the first year they enter the school 8 dols. per month, uniform, laundry, and board; the second year they receive 12 dols.; and the third year 25 dols. On graduating, if there are vacancies for graduate nurses, the State contracts them, paying them 50 dols. per month. The graduate nurses who have charge of the operation halls of the "Mercedes" Hospital and Hospital No. 1 in Havana receive 75 dols. This difference is due to the importance of the work done in these halls, which consists generally of ten to twelve operations of major surgery daily. The nurse in charge is assisted by one or more students of the third year.

Each school provides a sum sufficient to give a prize, on their graduation, to each of the nurses, which consists of a gold medal, such as this one which I had the honour to receive from the school of the "Mercedes" Hospital. This medal has a laurel crown around the border; on the obverse side there appears the national coat-of-arms of Cuba; and around this the name of the nurse to whom the medal is awarded is engraved; on the reverse side there is an inscription with the name of the school and the date of graduation.

The medal is awarded in the following manner: the physicians of the respective schools, including both the professors and those physicians who simply visit the patients in the different wards of the hospitals, meet, and after a careful study of the record which has been kept of the service of each one of the nurses during the three years of the course, determine by secret ballot and by majority vote, the student whom they consider most deserving of the prize.

As you may imagine, this prize is very highly esteemed among the students, because it always represents a great satisfaction to receive such a high mark of distinction from the physicians of the respective hospitals.

It is always an encouragement which strengthens the spirit and gives courage to continue the struggle to find our efforts rewarded, which, if they are not great, have at least the merit of having been made by taxing our whole heart.

The nurses take turns every three months in the wards of gynaecology, surgery, obstetrics, and in the operating halls, so as to acquire knowledge and experience in all the branches of nursing.

In the Insane Asylum, in our National Manicomium, there exists a school for *Special Nurses*; but the specialty does not consist in more advanced studies, but in dedication to that branch of medicine, without acquiring, however, other knowledge than that necessary to take care of the poor lunatic. This is, of course, a defective organisation, and the nurses who graduate from this school have not acquired a general knowledge of medicine. At present the Secretary of Health and Charities is giving the school a more scientific and practical organisation.

In order to become a student of the "reformed" school it is necessary to be a graduate nurse, and after six months of study in this school the students are furnished with a diploma qualifying them as *Special Nurses* for mental diseases, provided, of course, that they pass the examination.

Our Manicomium is situated some nine miles from the City of Havana on a large estate, and the asylum has accommodation for 2,500 patients, which is an evil, because the unfortunate insane cannot be sufficiently well attended, especially from the medical point of view. This school for nurses will now remain with ten undergraduate and eighteen post-graduate students, and eighteen young ladies more, who will acquire the knowledge sufficient for the mechanical care, if I may be permitted the expression, of the insane.

The school annexed to the Asylum for the Insane will be in charge, from next August, of Miss Walker, of the United States, who until a year ago was the Directress of the School in Hospital No. 1 in Havana, and from whom I expect the best results, in view of her fitness, her energetic character, and her intense fondness for work.

The Government of Cuba, on the advice of the present Secretary of Health and Charities, has sought in the City of London two young ladies with expert knowledge of mental diseases, in order to appoint them professors of our school.

This school, as well as the other six before mentioned, is in charge of a Directress, who is paid 100 dollars per month and house and lodging.

Until lately, nurses from the schools of the United States have been in charge of our schools in Cuba; but since the 1st of April last these American young ladies, to whom my country owes so much in this important Department of Schools for Nurses, were substituted by Cuban nurses, that is, by their former students, and the American nurses have now been made Professors of the School of Sanitary Nurses to devote themselves especially to the anti-tuberculosis campaign vigorously initiated by the Honourable President of the Republic, General Gomez, with the co-operation of the Secretary of Health and Charities.

Misses Martina Guevara, Trinidad Cantero, Rosa Seglie, Rosa Gallardo, Victoria Bru, and Hortensia Pérez are the Directresses of the Schools of the "Mercedes" Hospital, of Hospital No. 1, and of those of the Hospitals of Cienfuegos,

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)