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Editorial.

THE CONTAGION OF GOOD.

By many nurses the name of Agnes Jones is now scarcely known, yet it is that of one of the pioneers of modern nursing, who made a profound impression on the infirmity nursing world, and who with her talent for organisation combined rare sweetness, gentleness and goodness. So far back in the history of nursing does the life's work of Agnes Jones seem to have receded, that it comes almost as a surprise that His Grace the Primate of all Ireland, Dr. Alexander, who presided and spoke at a District Nursing meeting in Armagh, referred to her as one whom he had known very intimately.

The Primate said that if there were a contagion of evil there was also a contagion of good. In his own long life the most remarkable instance he had known of this sort of contagious power of goodness had been in a person that he had known very intimately. She was an Irish nurse, and he was greatly afraid that when he mentioned her name it would be familiar to but few of them. The history of Agnes Jones was indeed a history for good, for she worked with wonderful freedom, and novelty, in dealing with the sick, and was as good as two curates in the small but delightful village of Fahan near Londonderry, where he was rector. Was anything nobler than a life like hers? If there was it was the nobler death that she died.

Those members of the nursing profession who cherish the names of its heroines know that after training at the Deaconess Institution, Kaiserswerth, and St. Thomas's Hospital, London, she undertook the superintendence of the Brownlow Hill Infirmary, Liverpool, where, with twelve other Nightingale nurses, she revolutionised the nursing,

and practically demonstrated what can be accomplished by knowledge, organisation, skill, and devotion. Then came the crowning tragedy, the death, at the early age of thirty-six, of this radiant, highly sensitised, highly skilled nurse, from typhus fever, contracted in the course of her work, and from which her fragile, worn-out body had not the strength to rally.

Do we ask "to what purpose was this waste?" Not if we remember "the contagion of good." It is impossible to say how many women who were forces for good in the nursing world in the early eighties owed their inspiration to her life and example, or on how many the impress of her rare character was stamped, as studying it they strove to follow in her footsteps.

Dr. Ferrar, speaking at the meeting above referred to, said that the name of Agnes Jones was not forgotten. He was at Brownlow Hill Infirmary years after she had been there and her name was still cherished amongst the nurses, and, he believed, was so still. She was the first nurse to work on modern lines in Liverpool. In his time each nurse had to mind two miles of wards, but, when she went to the Infirmary, things were ten times worse.

To attempt to organise the nursing in the Infirmary in the face of such conditions must have required the faith which removes mountains.

In Fahan churchyard, over the grave of Agnes Jones, are inscribed the following lines, written by the Primate:

"Alone with Christ in this sequestered place,
Thy sweet soul learn'd its quietude of grace;
On sufferers, waiting in this vale of ours,
Thy gifted touch was trained to higher powers.
Therefore, when death, O Agnes! came to thee—
Not on the cool breath of our lake-like sea,
But in the workhouse hospital's hot ward,
A gentle helper with the gentle Lord—
Proudly, as men heroic ashes claim,
We ask'd to have thy fever-stricken frame,
And lay it in the grass beside our foam,
Till Christ the Healer calls His healers Home "

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)