

She writes: "There was nothing hard in my young life; hardships began with hospital life, where the first years of life were indeed very hard."

Her desire to become a nurse grew out of what she heard of the need of nurses in the Civil War. Though there seemed no way open by which she could be instructed in her desired vocation, she did not give up hope, and eventually entered the Boston City Hospital as assistant nurse in a large ward (this was apparently about 1868), and great was her disappointment to find her work only that which to-day is done by the ward maid. She was fortunate to have in her head nurse a most unselfish and sympathetic friend, and when she confided her disappointment to her said, "You will make an excellent nurse, and I will help you all I can."

"For days at a time," writes Miss Richards, "this woman would take my work in exchange for her own, which was, however, not the work of a nurse of to-day."

"I there learned how little care was given to the sick, how little their groans and restlessness meant to most of the nurses. There were a few who, like my own head nurse, did the work to the best of their ability, because they loved to serve humanity; but the majority were thoughtless, careless, and often heartless."

At the end of three months Miss Richards was offered the position of head nurse, but this only added to her discouragement.

"I knew," she writes, "I did not know enough for such a position. . . . But my determination to be a real nurse was not in the least changed, and a few years later an English book, entitled 'Una and Her Paupers' (the story of Agnes Jones) set me again seeking for a place in our country where I could be trained. I was directed to one of the doctors of the Hospital for Women and Children in Boston, who told me that in a few months a school would be organised in that very hospital, and advised me to file my application."

It is interesting to learn that the organiser of this school, Dr. Susan Dimock, went to Germany to complete her medical education. "She was there four years, and during her stay became interested in the work of the deaconesses at Kaiserswerth. This suggested to her a reform in the nursing methods of America, which she inaugurated at the New England Hospital for Women and Children, of which she took charge on her return from abroad. Although only twenty-five years of age, she showed wonderful administrative

ability in addition to her unusual gifts as a physician. It was there that I was the first student to enroll my name in the first class of five nurses in the first American training school.

"When I look back over the year I spent at the New England Hospital, in 1872-1873, and compare the training I received with the advantages of to-day, I wonder we turned out to be of any value. It does not seem quite loyal to my training school to tell how very little training we received, for everyone in authority gave us of her best nursing knowledge. We pioneer nurses entered the school with a strong desire to learn; we were well and strong; we were on the watch for stray bits of knowledge, and were quick to grasp any which came within our reach. What we learned we learned thoroughly, and it has proved a good foundation for the building of subsequent years."

Miss Richards next held for a year the position of Night Superintendent at the Bellevue Hospital, New York, where in 1873 the training school was organised by Sister Helen, one of the All Saints' Sisters. At the end of that time she was offered the position of Assistant Superintendent, but decided to respond to an urgent call to take up the position of Superintendent of the Training School at the Massachusetts General Hospital.

The school had had in the previous year a hard struggle for its existence. The medical and surgical staff had said "Put it out, we do not want it; it is no good." This put Miss Richards on her mettle, and soon the members of the staff were talking of "our school" with interest and pride.

In 1877 Miss Richards spent some months in Great Britain at St. Thomas' Hospital, with Mrs. Wardroper; at King's College Hospital, with Sister Ami; and at the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh; she concluded her visit with a few days spent at Lea Hurst with Miss Nightingale, who in a farewell letter wrote "May you outstrip us, that we in turn may outstrip you."

Next came the organisation of the training school at the Boston City Hospital, on the invitation of the Superintendent, Dr. Cowles, who had struggled long before he convinced the trustees of the wisdom of this method. His views were not shared by the ten house officers and their three assistants. "Looks of bare tolerance rather than of pleasure greeted me on my rounds, and plainly expressed the feeling that my suggestions were an interference."

Most interesting is the account of Miss Richards' work in "beautiful Japan," at the

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