

## A HISTORY OF NURSING.\*

### I.

In reviewing the last two volumes of "The History of Nursing," by Miss L. L. Dock, R.N., we must profoundly admire the skill which, in dealing with so vast a mass of material, has seized upon essentials, and wrested the heart out of modern nursing history in each country under consideration.

The first volume comprises four chapters—"The Story of the Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland," "The Growth of Nursing in the United States," "Nursing in the Countries of Northern Europe," and "The Revolution in French Hospitals."

#### GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

##### ENGLAND.

The author in this chapter shows how "Miss Nightingale's demonstration of the possibilities of nursing, followed by the success of her co-workers and disciples, drew widespread attention to its possibilities as an opening for woman's work, not as a career in the ordinary sense, for of material advantage it had none to offer, but as affording an opportunity for the relief of suffering and the service of humanity. This appealed very strongly to a group of earnest women of culture, refinement, and organizing genius, who from 1870 onwards carried on pioneer labours of the most intensive type." She then notes the dual basis of the provision for the relief of sickness through the voluntary hospitals and State-supported infirmaries and infectious hospitals, and shows that "the weakness of the Poor Law is that it aims not at the prevention of destitution, but at its relief, and so has the effect of creating it."

Nursing education and the various openings for nurses on the conclusion of their training are discussed, and the story of the formation and work of Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses is then told.

#### THE STRUGGLE FOR ORGANIZATION.

The place of honour in the third volume is given to the portrait of Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, "Founder and Leader of Organization in the Nursing Profession," the reason for this no doubt being that, on her initiative, in "the movement for self-organization and economic emancipation the nurses of Great Britain led the way. We have followed," says the author, "the path through long centuries, when the religious Sisterhood set the pattern of nursing;

we have seen the ebb and flow of religious societies aiming at freer forms, and have found the culmination of time's changes in Miss Nightingale's creation of a secular profession of women trained to nurse. But Miss Nightingale's work, magnificent as it was, did not include the inspiring idea of self-government in mutual, voluntary, democratic union. This was to be the service and the contribution of her successors, who, in turn, had to struggle desperately, and submit to contumely and abuse for the sake of their ideals."

Then follows a clear, dispassionate, and succinct account of the struggle for organization not yet closed. The history of the movement is so well known in this country that it is unnecessary here to refer to it in detail. Briefly, it gives the story of the foundation of the British Nurses' Association, the reasons which inspired the opposition to its ideals, the triumph of the nurses in obtaining a Royal Charter, the repudiation of the principle of State Registration, and the stormy subsequent history, with the reversion later to the foundation principle.

Meanwhile "the lesson of these events had been laid to heart by the nursing leaders, and they determined to make a fresh beginning and to call into being organization of nurses on other lines. The author mentions as foremost among the new organizations the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland, and, referring to Miss Isla Stewart, its President from its foundation in 1894 to the time of her death in 1910, writes: "In 1887 she was appointed Matron of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, succeeding Mrs. Fenwick, and died at her post of duty after twenty-four years of service, during which she stood forth as a strong tower in active furtherance of every progressive nursing movement. . . . Forceful and spirited, she never for a moment compromised on any question of policy, but boldly stood forth at every turn of the struggle as a champion of democratic progress."

Space does not permit more than the briefest reference to the foundation of the International Council of Nurses, the formation of Leagues of Certificated Nurses, and their grouping together in a National Council, the development of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, the triumph won for the cause in the House of Lords by Lord Ampthill, and the further organization of the Registration forces by the formation of a Central Committee, under Lord Ampthill's chairmanship, in support of the Bill.

The following conclusions are arrived at by the author: "One fact stands out in strong relief throughout all the history of

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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)