

was made. (England seems to have been behind other countries in this matter.) The vicious, the infirm, the bedridden, and the insane were often herded together, and received the very scantiest of attention. We are all familiar with the lines—

“Rattle his bones over the stones,  
He's only a pauper whom nobody owns.”

A Mrs. Jameson, who was sent in 1855 to inspect charitable and reformatory institutions at home and abroad, reports: “Never did I visit any dungeon or abode of crime or misery, in any country, which left the same crushing sense of sorrow, indignation, and compassion, almost despair, as some of our English workhouses. The inmates of some gaols had better treatment. In a large and well-ordered workhouse I visited 16 wards; in each, all the assistance given and all the supervision were in the hands of one nurse and a helper, both chosen from among the pauper women who were supposed to be the least immoral and drunken.” It was calculated that at this time there were under medical treatment in the London workhouses 50,000, and for these there were little more than 70 paid nurses, the others being pauper nurses and attendants.

By degrees the public became aware of what was going on; measures of reform were undertaken, and splendid pioneer work was done by many ardent spirits, foremost among them being Miss Louisa Twining, who devoted her life to ameliorate the conditions of Poor Law Nursing.

Another zealous worker in this direction was Mr. William Rathbone, of Liverpool, who, realizing the horror with which the sick poor regarded the workhouse infirmary, determined to investigate the matter. He found a terrible state of affairs. Many of the sick and infirm were locked up with no one to look after them all night. In some of the wards policemen had to patrol to keep order. The so-called nursing was carried out by pauper women. Mr. Rathbone consulted with Miss Florence Nightingale, with the result that in 1865 Miss Agnes Jones, the first trained Superintendent of a Poor Law Infirmary, who had been trained at St. Thomas' Hospital, began her work at Brownlow Hill Infirmary, with a staff of 12 nurses who had also received their training at St. Thomas' Hospital.

The memorials of Agnes Jones—a native of the North of Ireland—written by her sister, reveal not only the picture of a beautiful life, but also the record of untiring labour, and of almost insuperable difficulties overcome by courage, tact, and devotion. This was the beginning of trained nursing in Poor Law.

By degrees the nursing in the separate infirmaries was practically entirely performed by paid nurses, and a beginning was made in the training of Probationers. The rapid advance in Poor Law Nursing which followed may be gauged by the following statistics, printed in the report of the Poor Law Commission in 1909.

In 1866 there were only 111 paid nurses in the whole of the Metropolitan workhouses. In 1883 the numbers had risen to 784. In 1901 there were in the Metropolis 1,246 paid nurses; in the rest of England and Wales, 1,924. In addition, 2,000 probationer nurses were employed in London alone. There are at present over 7,000 nurses, either trained or in training, employed by the Local Government Board in England and Wales.

The wonderful changes which have come about in Poor Law Nursing in the last 30 years have not only been accomplished by Acts of Parliament and the arduous exertions of individuals and Societies working from without, but also by the splendid work of many of the pioneer Matrons and trained Superintendents, who were ready themselves to face opposition and obloquy in carrying through reforms they thought necessary, often working single-handed amid great difficulties. We who work under happier conditions owe them a deep debt of gratitude.

Miss Elma Smith, one of our senior Metropolitan Matrons, who herself had been trained at a large General Hospital, recently told some of her experiences and the changes she had seen during the last 30 years in the Central London Sick Asylum, which, owing greatly to her exertions, is now an excellent Training School. She had very uphill work, and when Probationers were first introduced had to educate not only them but also the Guardians as to needs of the sick poor and the necessity of providing adequate requisites and securing proper conditions. She describes having to prepare the kitchen and kitchen table for operations, and carry through the nursing almost single-handed; also the difficulty of getting the nurses to understand discipline and hospital etiquette. At first she used to have herself to go round in the early morning to make the Probationers get out of bed and ensure their being on duty in time. She had many difficulties to overcome in the domestic arrangements, such as providing that the nursing staff should use a central dining-room, &c., and that they should be supplied with daily rations. The rule was to give these out weekly, a supply of pudding being meted out to each nurse which was to last two or three days.

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