

A FAMOUS AMERICAN HOSPITAL.

THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL, BOSTON.

It was our good fortune when travelling from New York to San Francisco, to meet Miss Parsons, Superintendent of Nurses of this hospital, and her travelling companion and friend, Miss Hall, the Superintendent of another Boston hospital—of which more presently. The former gave us a most cordial invitation to visit her before returning to England. "You cannot return without visiting Boston," she said. Her tone seemed to imply—you will miss a great educational opportunity if you do! So, desiring to be saved from that stigma, we (Miss Hulme and myself) went! And our visit was one of our happiest experiences. In spite of the fact that Miss Parson's position is no sinecure, she yet found time—or *made* time—to provide that we should see all that we wanted to see in Boston.

The town is one of great historical interest to all English people. It is the capital of the State, and its situation on an inlet of Massachusetts Bay, called Boston Harbour, recalls vividly the historic "Boston Tea Party" of 1773, when about fifty men disguised as Mohawks, boarded the British tea ships and threw overboard 400 chests of tea. Oliver Wendell Holmes has immortalized that event in song. Boston, as we know, took a leading part in the Revolution, which culminated in the Declaration of Independence of 1776.

Besides this, the town is famous for many things. It is the birthplace of the spiritually-minded Phillips Brooks, who afterwards became Bishop of Massachusetts. Then there is the beautiful Trinity Church, built in the Romanesque style, at a great cost. The beautiful Municipal Library, renowned for its fine mural painting by Sargent, and others by Abbey. Some may remember when they were on view at the Guildhall, London, previous to being shipped to America. In the suburb of Cambridge, just across the river Charles, is the celebrated Harvard University; and near by is the house where dwelt one of America's most famous poets—Longfellow—now occupied by his daughter. In the village street stands the house of Dexter Pratt, the original of the poet's "Village Blacksmith." The forge has disappeared, but the "spreading chestnut tree" still stands. We had tea in the blacksmith's house, which is now used for that purpose as an historic show place.

There are many hospitals in Boston, but the Massachusetts General Hospital is certainly the most famous. It is old enough to have a history, and very interesting it is, both as a pioneer institution and also as a training school. It was founded in 1820, and is the third oldest in the States. It is, however, as a training school only, that we can regard it at present; we must refer to it another time and talk about the great event which has made it famous throughout the civilized world. Since the inception of the school, in 1873, until the present day, it has made steady progress,

continually advancing with the times, and keeping in step—as training schools should—with the advance and requirements of the medical profession. It is not too much to say that the standard of training has now reached high-water mark. The names of some of the most distinguished graduates are associated with this hospital, notably Miss Linda Richards and Miss Anna C. Maxwell (Superintendents), who organized the school in its early life.

The present Superintendent—Miss Parsons—our genial and hospitable hostess, belongs also to the Worshipful Order of Progressionists! She is a zealous educationist, and various important improvements have been made since her incumbency. Besides the usual subjects taught, which always includes dietetics, under a skilled dietitian, an administration course is given; also lessons in invalid occupations (we have seen the wonderful things that can be done in this way). The idea originated at Teachers' College, Columbia University, New York. Also a series of talks on current events. (N.B.—A splendid, mind-broadening exercise.) A three months' course in mental nursing, at the McLean Hospital for the Insane, close by; a four months' course in public health nursing; and last, but not least, a three months' course in the hospital social service department. A three months' course for probationers has also been established—what we should call a preparatory course. Two expert teachers are in charge of this department—one for theory and the other for practice. The probationers are distinguished from the junior nurses by their uniform. The gown is different in colour; they wear aprons without bibs, and no caps. (N.B.—A probationer in an American hospital is a pupil of the preparatory course, quite distinct from the junior nurse, who has been through it and is working in the wards.) The teacher of the practical course is Miss McCrae, a Scotchwoman. We had the advantage of being present at a lesson given by each of these teachers, and we formed the opinion that the pupils were very fortunate girls. The practical lesson was naturally particularly interesting. A wax figure in bed provides the object for the demonstration. The pupils sit around, while one of their number is selected to demonstrate. On this particular occasion, it was the preparation for and the method of passing the catheter. Miss McCrae has the faculty of imparting knowledge in a most interesting and attractive manner. She is keenly observant and never overlooks the smallest fault or omission; but before correcting, she will usually ask the class to point out the fault and so incite observation in spectators and demonstrator at the same time. The Massachusetts General Hospital also enjoys the reputation of being the first hospital in the States to establish and develop an organized system of hospital social service. The subject is one of such deep interest and importance that it deserves to be treated separately, which I hope to do later.

BEATRICE KENT.

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