

SOCIAL SERVICE.

"THE HOUSE ON HENRY STREET."*

"The House on Henry Street," by Miss Lillian D. Wald, is a book with which every nurse should become acquainted without loss of time. Certainly it should be in every nurse's library, for it is a classic which must always be referred to when nurses—may they be many—desire to work on lines similar to those which have proved so successful in the case of "The House on Henry Street," better known as The Nurses' Settlement, New York. Miss Wald tells simply and charmingly the story of the development of the work now centred in the House, from small and informal beginnings to its present position as a centre of multifarious activities, and a forceful influence as

"I had spent two years in a New York Training School for Nurses—strenuous years for an undisciplined, untrained girl, but a wonderful human experience. After graduation I supplemented the theoretical instruction, which was casual and inconsequential in the hospital classes twenty-five years ago, by a period of study at a medical college. It was while at the college that a great opportunity came to me."

From the room where she had delivered a lecture on home nursing at a technical school in Henry Street, now part of the Settlement, a little girl led her to the bedside of her mother with her newly-born infant. Over broken roadways, past odorous fish stands, and evil-smelling uncovered garbage cans, and up the slimy steps of a rear tenement, Miss Wald passed into the sick room. "All the maladjustments of our social and



LILLIAN D. WALD.



MARY M. BREWSTER.

In 1893.

a social factor in New York. The dedication is fittingly inscribed "To the comrades who have built the House," for many hands, some of them those of the most brilliant members of our profession—notably, Miss L. L. Dock—have helped in the building.

Many nurses know something of the circumstances which led Miss Wald over two decades ago to throw in her lot with the people of the East Side of New York, and to found an organisation which has demonstrated to the world the exceeding value of such a Settlement as she has evolved. Let her tell it in her own words.

"A sick woman in a squalid rear tenement, so wretched and pitiful that in all the years since I have not seen anything more appealing, determined me, within half an hour, to live on the East Side.

economic relations," she writes, "seemed epitomised in this brief journey and what was found at the end of it. The family to which the child led me was neither criminal nor vicious, although the family of seven shared their two rooms with boarders—who were literally boarders, since a piece of timber was placed over the floor for them to sleep on—and although the sick woman lay on a wretched, unclean bed, soiled with a hæmorrhage two days old, they were not degraded human beings, judged by any measure of moral values. . . .

"It would have been some solace if by any conviction of the moral unworthiness of the family I could have defended myself as part of a society which permitted such conditions to exist. Indeed, my subsequent acquaintance with them revealed the fact that, miserable as their state was, they were not without ideals for the family life, and for society, of which they were so unloved and unlovely a part.

* Henry Holt and Company, New York.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)