

## PROFESSIONAL REVIEW.

## "NURSING."\*

By Miss M. S. Cochrane, R.R.C., Matron of Charing Cross Hospital.

The handbook on "Nursing," by Miss M. S. Cochrane, R.R.C., F.B.C.N., Matron of Charing Cross Hospital, and Member of the Council of the British College of Nurses, published this week by Geoffrey Bles, 22, Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, S.W.1, as one of "The Life and Work Series," compresses a large amount of information into a small compass. The size of the volume is convenient, the paper good and the type clear. Miss Cochrane is to be congratulated on the subject matter, the attractive style in which the information it contains is presented, and on the high ethical standard which is maintained throughout.

In her preface the author says that this little book is written with the intention of giving the reader a slight idea of the work of the nursing profession from the point of view of the Matron of a Voluntary Hospital, and in this endeavour she has succeeded admirably.

In her introduction she remarks that "if thought be given at all to the work of the Nursing Profession it will be seen that the outstanding qualifications required in all the other professions must in some degree be combined in the person who chooses nursing as a career. The courage of the soldier, the loyalty and faith of the clergy, the tact and diplomacy of the barrister, together with the skill, initiative and resource of the medical profession must enter into the composition of the trained nurse. The tradition that nursing is purely a religious vocation dies hard, and the popular idea of a vocation to the average person is an employment in which the person engaged requires no material reward, merely the knowledge of his own virtues. The profession is still judged from an economic and material point of view, in a somewhat subordinate position.

"Nursing has always been, and always will be, as long as the true spirit of nursing lives, a profession of self-sacrifice and service."

"The modern reformers are inclined to lay stress on the material disadvantages of the work, and although they have effected improvements in the working hours and the scale of salaries, this must not be the one and only point of view. In endeavouring to lighten the work of the nurse it must always be kept in mind that there can be no comparison between nursing and other spheres of women's work. The nursing profession is concerned with sick and suffering people and these people will go on being ill regardless of time or day. They will not suddenly get better on Saturday at mid-day until Monday at 10 a.m., neither can patients be closed down like typewriters at five-thirty on other days. Sickness and disease are enemies which strike at all hours, and the nursing profession is a peaceful army continually at war with an enemy that is never entirely vanquished."

Writing of Nursing in the early Christian days, Miss Cochrane points out that the Nursing Profession, with the tradition of centuries behind it, is the most recent profession to be legally recognised. She gives names of devoted and noble women (noble by birth, as well as by character) who practised nursing chiefly in Monasteries and Hospices, one of whom was Olympia, the wife of a Roman citizen, who died when she was eighteen. She began, and continued her vocation under St. Chrysostom, who, saint though he was, would seem to have been not impervious to attractiveness, for he wrote to Olympia:—"I do marvel at the unspeakable coarseness of thy attire, thy shoes, etc., thy shapelessness." "This," says Miss

Cochrane, "rather gives proof that the criticism of the present day levelled at the Nurse's uniform is not anything new." Coming down through the centuries to the time of the Reformation and the dissolution of the Monasteries (A.D. 1525—1540) when the position of nursing was very high indeed, Miss Cochrane shows that for a time in England chaos reigned. There was no one to look after the sick and London was without hospitals. "At last things reached a crisis and the Government took over the old Royal Hospitals of St. Thomas' and St. Bartholomew and the Bethlem Royal Hospital, which was set apart for the insane. It may be said that this was the beginning of nursing as a lay profession," although it degenerated deeply before emerging under the authority of Parliament into a Profession controlled by the State.

Two outstanding personalities must always be remembered in connection with the evolution of nursing: Miss Florence Nightingale who by her work in the Crimean War proved that nursing was a suitable and satisfying occupation for women of intelligence and education, and Mrs. Bedford Fenwick who, for thirty long years worked, in season and out of season, for the organisation of nursing as a legally constituted profession.

Miss Cochrane points out that "Miss Nightingale laid the foundation of reform in military nursing, and it might be said that she altered the discipline of nursing from the early conventual rule to that of the military discipline which still exists to-day, if in a somewhat modified form," and later, that "Mrs. Bedford Fenwick conceived the idea of organising nurses in an association of which they themselves would have control, and invited leading hospital Matrons to attend a meeting at 20, Upper Wimpole Street, London, on December 7th, 1887, when she placed before them her proposal to found a British Nurses' Association, a principal object of which should be to obtain the registration of trained nurses." The full history of that movement has yet to be written, but a very clear outline is given by the author.

We commend the chapters on "Organising" and on "Nurses' Associations" to examiners and examinees where nursing history is one of the subjects, and, in particular, for University Examinations for a Diploma in Nursing. Both can then be assured of accurate information on these important subjects, which, up to the present, so far as we are aware, has not been recorded elsewhere.

Miss Cochrane's sense of humour peeps out, and she has some amusing stories to tell both of nursing during the war and the civil hospital life.

"One of the most difficult things to learn," she tells us, "was the etiquette and the multitudinous unwritten laws which governed the life of the new probationer. I will remember the second day I was in hospital. I met a Sister coming down the staircase and said 'Good morning' . . . I remember to this day the look of surprise and disdain, amounting almost to horror, with which my greeting was received. I learned later from one of my companions that it was quite out of order to address even the most recent senior to one self without first being spoken to . . . I had committed a solecism which merited my being 'shot at dawn.'"

"During my training," she writes, "I found I was always hungry and quite ready for meal times to come round . . . It was not considered etiquette at that time to ask for a second helping, and there was a tale of a probationer in one of the hospitals who, on asking for more, was told 'no lady ever eats two sausages!'"

Miss Cochrane found the voluntary workers in the wards of Charing Cross Hospital (where they did not do skilled work) very helpful, but "their inexperience in common or garden matters of life led to rather amusing happenings. On one occasion, on returning to the ward

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