

THE PASSING OF A NURSING PIONEER.

MISS MINNIE DRAKARD, S.R.N., F.B.C.N.

The death of Miss Minnie Drakard on January 12th at her home, "Wee Hoose," Datchworth, marks the passing of one who, in her devotion to the highest ethical standards of nursing and the progress and recognition of fever nursing, will be memorable in the annals of the nursing profession.

Miss Drakard, who received her training at Boston Hospital, Lincs, and Nottingham General Hospital, was well known as the matron of Plaistow Hospital, London, E., and at this institution, which became famous as a leading training school for fever nurses, and from which emanated the creation of the Fever Nurses' Association, she was appointed its first matron, where she remained until her retirement a few years ago.

A woman of culture, there was an exquisite touch and finish in every detail of whatever she undertook; her energy and enthusiasm were an inspiration in furthering the remarkable progress in fever nursing, and she was at one time President of the Infectious Hospitals Matrons' Association. A staunch member of the British College of Nurses, she was a keen advocate of State Registration for nurses, and inspired her pupils with the realisation of the special value of the care of infectious diseases.

Beneath an exterior of gentleness and charm, she was a courageous fighter in the nurses' cause, yet she had no illusions as to the personalities with which she came in contact; but her shrewd judgment, tempered by her tact and sympathy, endeared her to a generation of nurses who were privileged to come under her administration and who will long mourn a revered mentor.

After her retirement she continued to keep in touch with her nurses, past and present, and took an active part in the formation of the League of Fever Nurses, of which she was at one time President, affiliated to the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain, which superseded the Fever Nurses' Association, and undertook the arduous task of acting as its first Secretary. In addition she was an active member and much sought after in parochial affairs in the district in which she resided.

A lover of Nature, she revelled in her delightful garden, and its cultivation allured her to labour there in all seasons, "come wind, come weather."

Although for some months Miss Drakard's health had been failing, it was after being confined to bed for a few days only that the end came swiftly when she passed peacefully to her long rest.

To her sorrowing sister we extend our warmest sympathy.

THE PASSING BELL.

MISS MARY O'SHEA.

It is with deep regret that we record the death on January 5th, 1941, at Tidworth, of Miss Mary O'Shea, Sister, Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service.

Trained at the North City of Cork and County General Hospital 1929 to 1933, Miss O'Shea was appointed Staff Nurse, Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service on August 9th, 1934, and promoted Sister on August 9th, 1935. Miss O'Shea served at Colchester, and had recently returned from a tour of service in India.

WORD FOR THE MONTH.

For Mercy, Courage, Kindness, Mirth,
There is no measure upon earth,
Nay, they wither, root and stem,
If an end be set to them.

Laurence Binyon.

MEDICAL WOMEN OF THE PAST.

Now that women have won honourable recognition as medical practitioners and are doing fine work for the nation during the war, it is of interest to realise that their value is no new thing. To quote "A. B." in *Clinical Excerpts* :—

"It is customary to regard medical women as a modern phenomenon which is part of the general emancipation of women. But historical investigation shows that female doctors have existed since the earliest times, and that, although their numbers were not so large as at present, some of them became prominent as practitioners and authoresses. In the earliest civilisations of Egypt, Greece and Rome numerous women practised medicine, and although, in many instances, they were largely engaged in obstetrics, other women, in addition to professing a certain knowledge of healing, sold love potions and charms.

"Gradually individual practitioners gained fame. Thus a Greek princess called Anna Comemina was physician-in-chief to a large hospital established in the eleventh century in Constantinople for the sick, many of them Crusaders. In addition she wrote on gout and described the daily life of those who passed through the city. Another and more famous woman was Hildegard von Bingen, who was the Superior of a small convent, and who lived from 1099 to 1177. Although her temporal power was slight, she communicated with popes, emperors and kings, and produced a series of medical works of great importance. Her teachings resulted from a mixture of the humoral theories, biblical knowledge and observation and experience. A wide knowledge of plants and drugs enabled her to recommend treatment for conditions as diverse as vertigo, sterility, fever and diabetes. One method of treatment called for great skill; for a fever a mouse was stunned and fastened between the patient's shoulders, the symptoms disappearing when the mouse died.

"The outstanding medical school of the Middle Ages was at Salerno, a city inhabited by people of many nationalities. Women not only studied but taught there, and among the surviving names are those of Abella, who described black bile; Rebecca, who wrote concerning the embryo and wound treatment, and Trotula, one of the most famous of all women physicians whose works were published and mentioned by other writers for centuries after her death. Her methods of diagnosis and treatment appear much in advance of her times. She recommended few magical cures and stressed the necessity for accurate observation; moreover, part of the treatment of any disease was to attend to ordinary requirements such as warmth and cleanliness. Although she wrote on numerous subjects, her main interest was gynaecology. For dysmenorrhoea she used hot applications, baths and exercises, for *prolapsus uteri* astringent lotions, while pruritus was treated with soothing ointments. One recommendation for sterility, the administration of pig's testicle to both husband and wife, sounds like a pioneer excursion into endocrinology.

"In 1682 von Hohenberg published a book in which he recommended that the mistress of the household should prepare a collection of drugs and dressings suitable for medical use. This could be used by the doctor called from a distance without being given sufficient information concerning the illness. Not only should she collect the materials, but she was expected to understand distillation and the preparation of potions; and at the proper seasons plants, flowers, roots and seeds had to be gathered and stored in suitable receptacles or hung from hooks in order to protect them from dust, mice and vermin.

"In Elizabethan times, numerous English women had a wide knowledge of medicine, although few can have engaged in full practice. Lady Hoby not only treated the sick but dressed wounds and practised surgery; in one case, a

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)