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THE TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

FOR NURSES,

AND

THE WORKHOUSES:

AN ATTEMPT TO SOLVE ONE OF THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS
OF THE PRESENT DAY.

BY

EDWARD SIEVEKING, M.D.

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS; PHYSICIAN TO THE NORTHERN
DISPENSARY; LATE PHYSICIAN TO THE BRITISH RESIDENTS AT HAMBURG,
ETC. ETC. ETC.

“What is wanted by this large community is not so much money, not so much the
gift of old clothes, but what they want is the living agent.”—LORD ASHLEY.

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1849.

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The subject matter of the following chapters
has been selected from the following sources
and is intended to be used as a text book
for the purpose of the training institution
of the National Board of Health
of the United States

TRAINING INSTITUTION

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P R E F A C E.

THE subject matter of the following remarks has in various forms been already privately brought before the notice of several individuals whose sympathy in the condition of the lower orders, and extensive acquaintance with existing institutions eminently qualify them to form an opinion on any proposition bearing upon social reforms. The manner in which they have expressed themselves in regard to the proposition which the writer now ventures to bring before a larger tribunal, encouraged him to hope that he has not been led away by a mere hypothesis. He will, indeed, consider himself fortunate if he should succeed in imparting his own convictions to others, who may not have been in a position to arrive at such conclusions from personal intercourse with various classes of society; and if the main features of his proposition should happen to coincide with views already adopted by men of larger experience, he trusts, that by their countenance and support, they will assist in rendering the undertaking more feasible and more practical.

E. S.

*Brook Street,
Grosvenor Square.*

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THE TRAINING INSTITUTIONS,

&c. &c.

ALL who are at all conversant with the wants of the poor, will consider the establishment of the Training Institution for Nurses as a great boon conferred by its originators upon society. The present class of nurses, with few exceptions, do not present those qualifications, which the very responsible trust imposed upon them, renders necessary; the want has been long felt and expressed, but few steps have hitherto been taken by Protestant England to supply a deficiency which affects all classes of society, from the peer of the realm and the wealthy merchant to the pauper applicant for parish-relief. Any one who has suffered from the debilitating and harassing effects of bodily sickness, can testify to the mitigation or to the aggravation of his sufferings, dependent upon the care and kindness, or to the inattention and neglect he has experienced from his nurse. It is necessary but to allude to the mistakes made by nurses in the administration of medicines, or in pursuing the explicit and important directions of the medical adviser in regard to the diet or general treatment of the patient,—instances

of which have occurred in every person's private experience,—to force conviction of the paramount necessity of securing for society at large, a body of efficient attendants upon the sick. Ignorance is indeed the parent of presumption, and it may be safely asserted, that the efforts of medical men are rendered futile by few things more than by the meddlesome interference of ignorant attendants. In a purely medical point of view, therefore, the interest of the patient is closely concerned, in securing the services of a properly qualified nurse. Her tact, her observation, her evenness of temper, her calm energy and mild forbearance will comfort and assure the invalid, give support, and be a guide to the friends, and insure a regularity and correctness in the execution of the medical orders, which are attainable by no other means. Most members of the higher classes can bear testimony to the truth of these remarks from personal experience. But how few are there who have seriously thought upon the misery and distress that disease brings to the hut of the labouring poor, who have witnessed the withering blast of sickness, the destruction of hope, the bitterness of despair, the overwhelming anguish in the lowly cottage, when child after child has been attacked, when the mother has succumbed to the wearying night-watches and daily cares, when the hard-earned gains of months and years have been sacrificed for the comfort of the dying offspring, or the prostrated partner. How few have seen the

perseverance, and the love, and the self-devotion of our poor in days of darkness and hopelessness. How many benevolent individuals think that they have performed all the demands their religion makes upon them, when they have subscribed to the charities in their vicinity. How many of the politicians of the day have become personally acquainted with the virtues of our poor, and learnt, that their coercive measures had but a slight influence during the late crisis, in preventing England from becoming the scene of anarchy and confusion, compared to the influence of real virtues prevailing among classes, whose chief liability to suspicion consists in their poverty? If the nurse is wanted in the mansion of the rich, if there, money often fails to command the kindness and attentive care of a properly qualified nurse from a lack of proper training, how much stronger is the claim of the poor upon society to provide such assistance for them, and to secure attention to their wants and, we may almost say, salvation from utter ruin, by the institution of efficient and properly educated nurses. We wish to avoid entering too much into detail, but we are anxious to insist with all the energy of conviction derived from experience and reasoning, upon the importance to the poor and to the rich, to all ranks of society, of providing for the former that assistance which, in days of illness and distress, a good nurse alone can give. Let us picture to ourselves the family of a mechanic or labourer, who

scarcely earns enough to support himself and his family when in health, and consider the various duties entailed upon his wife, independent of the additional labour imposed upon her by the attempt to eke out a more comfortable existence, and then imagine the effects of illness in any one member of that little circle. The invalid cannot be separated from the healthy, but is exposed to all the turmoil, and the draughts, and the impurities arising from the various household offices—the mother is unable to leave the room to attend to the duties that may call her away, or if forced to do so by utter necessity, the child is left without proper attendance and supervision; the father comes home, after his hard day's work, and instead of being received in a clean room and by smiling faces, he is subjected to the annoyances of a sick-chamber, and reminded by every thing he sees and hears of the dangers that threaten him; his and his wife's rest are impaired by the wants of the invalid—and thus day after day go by, and perhaps more sickness supervenes, more expenses are necessary, until death relieves the patient, when destitution, perhaps, has overtaken all the rest of the family. We will not harrow the reader by an account of all the misery of this kind that medical men daily witness; but we will say that under all the various forms in which we have seen and watched the sufferings of the poor, we have felt that more praise was due to them for meekness, kindness, and longsuffering, than the bulk

of the higher classes have any conception of. Where misery has not yet frozen the heart, and stunted the intellect, there may often be seen a patient endurance of distress, worthy of a higher record, and an unwillingness to complain, and to parade their misfortune, which might well have shamed a listless dyspeptic, who was driving by in all the pride of wealth, and suffering only from his self-created disease. Much has been said and written of late concerning the influence of sanitary measures upon the moral and physical well-being of the poor, and an argument as true as any which has been employed in support of systematic hygiene has been, and is, the intimate relation which exists between the poor and the rich; it has been demonstrated to a certainty that the malaria of a fetid drain, and the neighbourhood of poisonous exhalations affects the well-being of the cottage inmate, in the alley, and the dwellers in the adjoining square;—that no isolation of influences exists. The principle applies equally to the question before us, and the living charity produced by a real intercourse with, and practical improvement of the poorer classes in every point of view, reacts beneficially upon those who, in the first instance, only appear to confer a benefit. There is a great practical reality in the words of Scripture, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. It would not be difficult to prove the position from what has already been achieved in our prisons. The influences exerted there are not

confined to the misdemeanant or the felon, but have spread widely through the whole framework of society ; what was considered a purely political institution, is now converted into a means of great social reform. The feeling, that the relation existing between the higher and the lower classes of society, is something more than that indicated by the laws of the state—is there manifested, and it has also found utterance in the opposition of many good men to the new Poor Laws. It was felt that they were insufficient, but the chasm they left, is one that must remain, as long as the relief granted to the poor is one exclusively of necessity, and not based upon the higher principle of humanity and Christianity. Has anything been done to supply the defect? Have our parishes, and our workhouses, and unions, been anything more than a compulsory sacrifice on the part of the rate-payers, for the mere purpose of warding off an impending danger, a temporary expedient for averting the threatened eruption of violence and destruction. And yet we are living in a *Christian state*, a state professing to acknowledge the principles of a religion which teaches the essential equality of man, and which inculcates that every individual should do unto others as he would that others should do unto him. The times are gone by when it was necessary to prove that politics and Christianity were not at variance, or mutually exclusive. But has the nation, as such, acted upon this tacit acknowledgment of

their duties? Is not the Poor-Law question as great a thorn as ever in the side of the Home Secretary? We are not so presumptuous as to point out the means by which all the evils of pauperism may be done away with; but we are bold enough to assert that pauperism is a disgrace to a Christian community, and that it can only be a result of an insufficient performance of the duties on the part of the rich to the poor. It is at least well to know the source of an evil, though we may not at once discover the means of eradicating the influence of long misconduct. It is well to recognise the real malady, and to become deeply conscious of our own guilt; and though we may not destroy the recollection, we may yet obviate its injurious influences, and gradually neutralise its future effects.

We may appear to have wandered far from our subject, but we have wished to demonstrate that the scheme to which it is desired to draw attention rests upon a wider basis than that of mere expediency; that it involves one of the most important social problems of the day; and that it can only be made effective, by acknowledging the true relations which bind man to man, and the state and religion.

The Training Institution for Nurses has been established for the purpose of remedying, to a certain extent, the evil of which we have spoken; and there can be little doubt that the exertions of its supporters will meet with much cordial and active sympathy, and in the end enjoy large success. But we have

already seen that many and excellent institutions have failed to obtain that extensive sphere of action which was contemplated by their proprietors, from difficulties which an isolated society, however energetic and however well-disposed, can scarcely be expected to overcome. The funds required for an Institution which should directly affect a large portion of the population—the tax upon society at large in point of labour and time, for an isolated and individual scheme—is greater, we apprehend, than it will be possible to meet; and we further apprehend, that inestimable as the indirect advantages of the Training Institution will become, it is likely to waste its strength, unless it concentrates the means really at its disposal within such limits as will render it entirely feasible and practical. We would wish to call to remembrance the admirable speech of His Royal Highness Prince Albert, at a meeting held by the Society for the Improvement of the Labouring Classes in the spring of the past year, in which it was stated to be the object of that Society to aim only at model establishments, to serve as examples to others; ever mindful that any real improvement must be the result of the exertions of the labouring classes themselves. The Society did not mean to provide for every labouring man the comforts and advantages of a clean and salubrious home, but that, by dint of models and examples, it aimed at encouraging individuals to adopt and follow the lessons of wisdom and science brought home to

them, by the practical conviction of their real benefit. And well indeed has the Society deserved of mankind, by the practical lessons it has already taught. The Training Institution will do well to limit its exertions in a similar manner; and we doubt not that the stimulus it will be able to afford, and the example it will set, will equally affect the welfare of humanity at large, though in a less direct manner than some of its more sanguine supporters may at present anticipate. But the want of good nurses is as much a national want, as the improvement of the labourer's cottages; and if we could find the means of practically basing the remedy upon the acknowledged absence of the necessary intercourse between the different classes of society—if we could propose a means of uniting existing Institutions with the projected scheme of developing what exists, instead of attempting to create—we are more likely to arrive speedily and satisfactorily at the solution of the problem.

We have shewn, or rather we have hinted, in the above remarks, that there is a great lack of the proper and active sympathy on the part of the higher classes, for the poor; that the want of good nurses is felt by all classes of society; that the assistance of an efficient nurse would, in a great many cases, save a family from ruin and degradation; and that, to procure a body of nurses adequate to the demand, it is desirable to obtain the co-operation, and to work through the medium, of existing

institutions. We have pointed to the effect produced upon the state of the prisons, on prison discipline, and on the entire theory of punishment, by the exertions of private charity ; and we would now wish to draw attention to the argument, that if society is bound to devote its sympathies to, and ameliorate the moral and physical condition of the felon, it is, *à fortiori*, bound to do so in a much higher and more effective manner in reference to the inmate of the workhouse. It is indeed strange that while philanthropists and political economists, of all shades and creeds, have agreed in associating crime and pauperism more or less closely ; and while the Poor-Laws have nearly brought about revolutions in England, that there has been, we may say, an entire absence of interest in the condition of the pauper, beyond what regards the amount of poor's rate, and the lowest possible scale upon which human nature can exist. Few of the wealthy have reflected upon the misery which drives the poor man to the workhouse, and the long course of suffering that he must have gone through before he submits to the degradation of receiving parish relief ; for there is indeed that independent spirit widely prevailing among our poor, which forbids their receiving assistance from the workhouse, as long as a ray of hope exists of obtaining an honourable livelihood. Few, if any, have brought that true spirit of philanthropy, which infuses hope, life and energy, to bear upon the pauper ; and we would attribute this mainly to the

misunderstanding of the relations of politics and religion. The days of Machiavelism have, at least in Great Britain, gone by for the former; and if there is one step further to take, it is the acknowledgment of the principle that the Institutions of the state should but be the bearers—the outward instruments of true Christianity. The want of a true union between religion and the state, must give way to an acknowledgment of their close mutual relation; and though we are far from advocating an hierarchical Government, we assume it to be the object of legislation to conform, in every way, to the first principles of our religion; as it is the duty of the members of society to render private institutions conformable to the same spirit which must prevail in the legislature. In practical Christianity we may say that all creeds meet; and as the question of crime and pauperism should not be made one of party, so without being latitudinarian, we venture to assert that in the duties we would impose upon the higher classes, in reference to our workhouses, we may find a means for the cordial co-operation of all Christian sects.

We would, therefore, insist upon the urgent necessity of, in the first place, extending the system of visiting, now so beneficial in the prisons, to our workhouses. An intimate acquaintance with the character of the pauper, and of his moral and physical wants, must be obtained before we may hope effectively to operate upon his condition; and as

that knowledge increases, the means of restoring him to society, and of reviving his moral energy will not fail to present themselves. Many a lady who now throws away alms to the undeserving beggar, would then find that true kindness reaps its reward, and that it generates the gratitude she now so often misses, because the gift would be felt as a token of real interest and benevolence. The character of the recipient of parish-relief would not be depressed and lowered if he felt that he still had hope, that there was not a barrier between himself and society, and that his more fortunate brethren admitted the reality of his claims upon them. One of the great practical difficulties that has hitherto presented itself to all who wished to raise the character of the very poor, was the collision of various interests; if we can find a means of avoiding such collision, we confer a double boon on society. Now we have on the one hand, an acknowledgment of the want of nurses for the poor and the rich, and on the other we actually find that it is already the custom in many workhouses to permit such of the inmates as have proved themselves to be trustworthy, to go as nurses to the neighbouring poor in cases of sickness. Here then we find the germs of what is sought. The workhouses and unions exist throughout the kingdom, they contain many deserving and excellent individuals of both sexes, and we are bound to assume *à priori* that no stigma attaches to their reputation beyond that of

poverty. The present inefficiency of the workhouse nurses is the very least objection, it only renders the argument of the necessity of actual intercourse and tuition, the more forcible. Their education and subsequent employment would not interfere with the interests of other existing classes, and even assuming all inmates of the workhouses, which is not the case, to belong to the most ignorant orders, we should, by our endeavours but render them more able than they at present are, to perform duties, which they are already permitted to fulfil. The local acquaintances of the paupers, their previous sad experience, and their knowledge of the real wants of the poor, would give them *cæteris paribus*, many advantages over the nurses sent from a distance; and if the visiting system, and a proper system of control be fully established, we should acquire a close chain, linking all the elements of society, and tending not only to the promotion of reciprocal kindness of feeling, but to a material economy of time, labour, and money.

It would lead us too far if we were to enter fully into the subject of the waste of these valuable commodities by society as at present constituted, but we have little hesitation in saying, that there are few charities which would not be gainers in point of all three, by an efficient combination of Poor-law relief with the proposed system of visiting and instruction.

We will not weary our readers with further generalities, but reduce our arguments, and the proposi-

tions which we are desirous of seeing practically realized under the following heads :—

Firstly, Our workhouses have not hitherto met with that attention on the part of the higher ranks, and more especially of visiting ladies, which they deserve. An intimate acquaintance with the necessities, moral and physical, of the inmates, will lead to a better knowledge of the relations and wants of the poor generally, and encourage kindly feeling on all sides. Every thing done to raise the morale of the poor, will react beneficially upon the wealthy classes, and will tend to diminish the amount of crime on the one hand, and the poor and county rates on the other.

Secondly, Our workhouses and unions contain a large number of able-bodied men and women, for whom it is difficult to create means of lucrative employment, without coming into collision with the interests of the various trades. There is, consequently, an absence of all honourable emulation, and the workhouse destroys hope and self-reliance. Some of the females have already been employed in many workhouses as nurses to the neighbouring poor, but without any guarantee for their ability to fulfil so responsible a charge, beyond that of general good conduct in the workhouse. There is no class who would suffer by the female inmates of the workhouse being offered both the means and the inducements to perform the duties of nurse zealously, and by a prospect being thus

held out to them of permanently ameliorating their condition.

Thirdly, The present scheme does not immediately embrace the male paupers, though the visiting system, if properly developed, would necessarily improve their condition, and, as undoubtedly, the suggestions would soon present themselves of benefiting them in an equal degree. There is every reason to assume that the females are capable of receiving instruction, and of being rendered efficient attendants upon the sick. Being themselves acquainted with sickness and want, they would be peculiarly adapted to enter into the feelings, and to suit themselves to the habits and convenience of the sick poor. Many of the paupers would have acquaintances and relatives among the neighbouring inhabitants, and any honourable distinction gained by the former, the very appointment of nurse being a mark of superiority, would reflect upon their connections, and form a further link between the pauper and society.

It is therefore proposed—

1. That a central committee be formed in London, consisting of clergymen and medical men, and others interested in the project, for devising the means for carrying out, in the speediest, most effective, and comprehensive manner, the proposed workhouse visiting system—that they enrol the names of ladies and gentlemen willing to co-operate with them, and that they encourage the formation

of local committees, composed in a similar manner of the clergy, the members of the medical profession, and others.

2. That the co-operation of the various Boards of Guardians be at once solicited, and that it be distinctly expressed that no undue interference with the political machinery of the workhouse system, nor any increase of taxation be intended.

3. That the local committees determine with the respective Boards of Guardians upon the specific manner in which the general plan may be carried into execution, and that they keep up a relation with the central committee, so as to act as much as may be expedient with its concurrence.

4. That the lady members form distinct committees, to which the honorary secretaries, and the medical man appointed for that purpose, be allowed access. Any official communication between the ladies' and the gentlemen's committees to pass through the honorary secretary.

5. That the central committee at once place itself in relation with the existing institution for educating nurses, so as to secure as far as compatible with the mutual objects, a cordial co-operation.

6. That all the expenses incident to the execution of the project be defrayed by private contributions, but that it be an acknowledged object of the institution to diminish the poor's-rates and to become self-supporting; therefore, that the nurses be sent out

a. Gratuitously to the poor of a district, appli-

cation being made upon the certificate of a qualified medical man ;

b. On terms of consideration, to be fixed by the clergyman of the district and one (or two) members of the committee, to persons in better circumstances ; and

c. At a definite charge to those in easy circumstances.

7. That the nurses be allowed to receive no pecuniary remuneration from the families they attend, and all monies due for their services be paid to the respective treasurers.

8. That the nurses be divided into three classes :
a. those who have entered into a general agreement to serve ; *b.* those who have acquired the right to a certain low rate of remuneration ; and *c.* those, who, by a certain length of service, and good conduct, are qualified for the highest rewards that may be at the disposal of the central board, either in the shape of pecuniary gratification, or of an admission to the model institutions.

8. That the committees of this institution place themselves in relation with the District Visiting Societies, and solicit their co-operation.

We do not think it advisable for the present to offer a more detailed plan of operations. We have wished in the above to give merely such an outline by which we may hope to render our views intelligible. It is not the particular form that we would wish to insist upon, as the main object might suffer,

by dwelling too much upon points of secondary consideration. If the principle involved be a correct one, and the general proposition meet with that approbation in a larger sphere, which we are able to say it has experienced in a limited circle, the mould in which it is to be cast, though important, will be formed with comparative facility. But we cannot avoid expressing an earnest hope that no deficiency in our mode of treating so serious a problem, will debar the reflecting reader from devoting his best attention to the general question at issue, and more especially that prejudices may not be allowed to weigh against and overbalance the real demands made upon a Christian community, in which there has indeed been as yet but too little communion in spirit amongst its various ranks, but which must forego its often vaunted title to true civilization, unless much more be done towards drawing together the bonds of humanity than has yet been effected. The poor, undoubtedly, have their peculiar prejudices also, which require to be combated and overcome, but let it not be said that the prejudices of the intellectual portion of society are stronger than those of the uneducated.

We have all of us seen signs and wonders, let us shew that they have not passed by us unheeded—unrecorded.

THE END.