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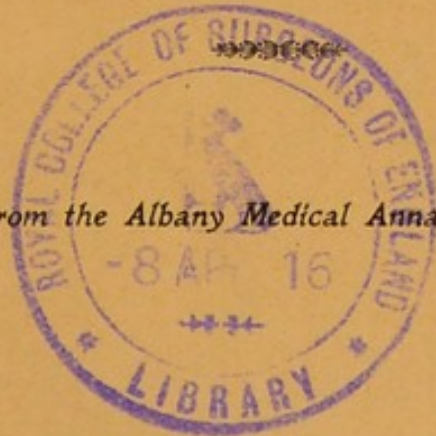
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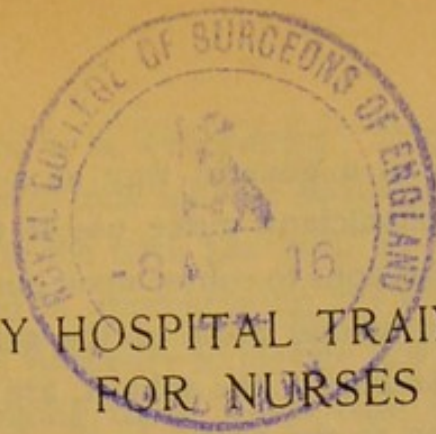
Training School for Nurses

*Graduating Exercises
of the Class of 1900*

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THE ALBANY HOSPITAL TRAINING SCHOOL FOR NURSES

GRADUATING EXERCISES OF THE CLASS OF 1900

NURSING AS A PROFESSION.*

BY MRS. HUNTER ROBB,

Cleveland, Ohio

*Mr. Chairman, Members of the Board of Trustees and Managers,
Members of the Graduating Class, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

Until quite recently it has been usual in this country to ask some well known member of the medical profession to make the address to the graduating class of nurses. The fact that your Board of Governors has departed from this custom and selected a trained nurse to assist in performing this pleasant duty is an evidence, I take it, of a desire on their part to show the high appreciation in which this particular branch of medicine is regarded by them, while at the same time the innovation may be looked upon as an indication that nursing has reached its years of experience and that its representatives are now expected to speak with authority on the affairs pertaining to it. In this spirit I have accepted your kind invitation and have now the honor of addressing this, the first class of graduates, to go forth from the Albany Hospital. With these two thoughts predominating in my mind I have selected as the subject of my remarks "Nursing as a Profession."

In speaking of the work of the graduate, who has received her training in some one of our best hospitals, nursing has of late

*Delivered at the graduating exercises of the Class of 1900 of the Albany Hospital Training School for Nurses, May 10, 1900.

come to be spoken of in a general way as a profession. It is not unusual to hear physicians make use of the term, and for members of other professions to confer upon our work the dignity of this title, and even among those of the general public, who have a broad understanding of the subject, are found many who classify it as belonging to the professions. On the other hand, there still remain some among the very conservative, or among those who have not taken the trouble to keep themselves informed on nursing affairs, who still have the impression that nursing consists chiefly in manual labor. Nor is it unnatural that people, who honestly believe this to be true, should proclaim that the old-fashioned nurse is good enough, and maintain that there is no necessity or scope afforded by the work for a high order of education. If these premises were true, it would have to be admitted that nursing has not the first elements of a profession, that the duties required are very simple, that the education of a nurse is complete when she has once learned to wash her patient, make his bed, take his temperature and prepare his food—in fact to do the ordinary duties that any of the old-fashioned nurses were qualified to perform—and that sufficient practical skill in her work can be imparted to her in the sick room without running the risk of spoiling her by demanding from her so dangerous a thing as knowledge, and thus rendering her something more than a machine. If these views are correct, certainly one would justly rank the trained nurse with persons following a trade for a livelihood.

To Elevate the Profession. One however can see many reasons why such opinions should still be held by some—although, I hope, by a very small minority—for the call is not far nor the years many since the day when the work of nursing was relegated to those among women who were not considered desirable candidates for the most menial of domestic work. The history of the events that have brought about so marked a change in the care of our sick is familiar to all of us, but the steps by which nursing has gradually come to be spoken of as a profession—whether deservedly or

otherwise—may not be so well known. It may, therefore, not be amiss for us to-day to look into the subject sufficiently to find out upon what grounds the term has come to be used, and how far nurses are justified in appropriating the title; and furthermore, what steps are still necessary to elevate this new profession to its proper position among those which date from long ago. We all know that the tendency of the present day is to bring to a common level all things under the sun. In such a levelling process the proper order of things is not infrequently reversed, so that in some cases things of a low degree have become elevated, while others of high degree have lost something of their dignity and the awe and reverence with which they have previously been regarded has become lessened. As a consequence some of our most time-honored names and titles have not escaped unscathed and among the most conspicuous sufferers are the terms “professor” and “profession.” There was a day when to be a professor was to bear one of the most honored of educational titles that a man could have conferred upon him by his fellows, while the distinct social status belonging to a member of a profession was accorded as the right of one to whom had been entrusted more than ordinary responsibility. But to a large extent the glory has departed, so that to-day to be a professor or a member of a profession is not necessarily associated with a great degree of learning or a highly responsible position.

In the Popular Sense. It may be that to many minds the use of the term profession in relation to nursing would only be accepted in the popular sense and that the title would not be regarded as deserving of honor from any high standpoint. For this reason alone it might be suggested that it would be as well for nurses to eschew the title until their worthiness to use it on its highest plane is more clearly demonstrated and until their claims to it are recognized as being beyond discussion. But it must be remembered that the vocations of the clergy, the physician and the lawyer are still held in some degree of reverence and that the term profession as applied to any of these classes of workers still possesses its full

significance and implies more responsibility, more serious duty, a higher skill and an employment needing a more thorough education than is required in certain other vocations of life. That at the present time all these demands are made when the woman who undertakes nursing as her vocation is proved by the fact, whenever she falls short of a high standard, she is subjected—and rightly so—to the sharpest criticism, not only from the physician but also from an exacting laity. “To whom much is given from him shall much be required” implies also that from whom much is required to him shall be accorded not only the means for acquiring the knowledge necessary for such duties, but also the recognition that such work is of a high order.

To distinguish between the popular idea of the care of the sick and to justify us in our pretensions to the rank of a profession, let us consider briefly the demands made upon the nurse by the scientific medicine of to-day. If nursing be the handmaid of medicine the evolution of the latter necessarily implies that of the former. Both must develop on the same lines and for both a careful training is necessary, since the modern scientific methods of medical treatment must inevitably be multiplied unless they are supplemented by the untiring and intelligent service supplied by the trained nurse, who has allotted to her no small part in helping to bring cases of grave sickness to a successful termination. To take only one instance: it certainly requires more than mechanical skill on the part of a nurse to follow the preparations for an aseptic operation—full of significance in every detail—and the saying that “dust is danger” must have a bacteriologically practical application in her mind.

Operating Room Nurse. That the operating room nurse is now regarded as one of the important members of the surgeon's staff is fully demonstrated by the care with which candidates for such positions are selected. Nor can just any one appreciate the full meaning of the physician when he says “the nursing will be half the battle in this case.” In fact even the general public has come to recognize the important part that skilled nursing takes

in caring for such diseases as typhoid fever and pneumonia, and other forms of infectious diseases, because of the constant and intelligent attention that is needed in such cases in the absence of the physician. To acquire not only the practical but the theoretical part of her work, the nurse must devote three years of her life to special preparation; during that time, besides being taught her practical work, she receives instruction in the principles of nursing by means of lectures and class room demonstrations in anatomy, physiology, materia medica, and massage. To fully appreciate the effect upon the patient of the air he breathes, and the food he eats, she must know something of ventilation, hygiene and practical chemistry. To become acquainted with the best forms and preparations of foods, by which the greatest possible amount of bodily resistance to disease is established and maintained, she must supplement her knowledge of chemistry by a special course of practical work in the diet kitchen. Such matters of detail are usually entrusted to the nurse, since she alone can devote to them the constant and unremitting attention that are necessary. The physician can lay down a broad general outline in such matters but the details—the little things that matter so much—must of necessity be left to the nurse, and this thoroughness is necessary because her knowledge must go far towards supplying that of the physician in his absence. As a physician has truly said: "The hands of a nurse are a physician's hands lengthened out to minister to the sick. Her presence at the bedside is a trained vigilance supplementing and perfecting his watchful care; her knowledge of the patient's condition, an essential element in the diagnosis of disease, her management of the patient is the practical side of medical science. If she fails to appreciate her duties her physician fails in the same degree to bring aid to his patient."

Wider Duties. For the simple performance of nursing work such knowledge is requisite, but when the wider duties of either head-nurse in a hospital or those of a principal of a school for nurses are assumed, where one must not only know, but be

capable of imparting that knowledge to others, the responsibilities become proportionately greater. To possess such qualifications one must have a good training as a nurse, for which nothing can be substituted. It means all the difference that lies between the skilled, practiced worker and the amateur; no native tact, no self-sacrifice—it is hard to say it, not even love—can supply its place. Nursing has thus become a matter of scientific discipline and a therapeutic agent of ever-increasing importance. In large part it is this ability that constitutes the difference between the graduate nurse of to-day, and the so-called nurse of former times, and that has rendered trained nursing worthy to rank as a department in scientific medicine. To be sure there still remains and must ever remain the side to nursing so often spoken of as menial; but no duty, however lowly, which is dignified by methods of thoroughness, and unsparing self-sacrifice can ever lower the status of those who perform them. Nor can I recall to mind any duty of a nurse, however trivial it may seem, in which a trained intelligence does not stand for something; in fact I know of no work where a greater range of widely different situations may have to be met, all of which call for a marked degree of adaptability. One day the nurse is busied in the wards of a hospital with all manner of diseases; at other times she finds herself in the homes of wealth and affluence surrounded by ease and luxury, while in the next week she may be summoned to the homes of the poor, to combat against dirt, want and ignorance added to disease, in which the most trying and disagreeable of tasks may be required at her hands; nor do the camps of war or the hot-beds of pestilence call upon her for aid in vain. Nursing, thus, makes great and varied demands upon her followers and exacts in no small degree the qualities of skill and tact, endurance and patience, which must be strengthened by enthusiasm.

The Higher Responsibilities. Can a woman, in any other kind of work she may choose for herself, find higher and graver responsibilities? Where human life and health are concerned, what shall we term the little things, or the menial duties? The

spirit in which she does it makes all the difference. Invested as she should be with the dignity of her profession and the cloak of love for suffering humanity, she should ennoble anything her hand may be called upon to do, and from work done in this spirit will her true recompense come to her far outweighing that of silver and gold.

But the nurse is also essentially an instructor, and her mission includes the prevention of disease as well as the relief of those already suffering from its ravages. In district nursing we are confronted with conditions which require the highest order of work, the actual nursing of the patient being, perhaps, a minor part of her work when compared with the influence for practical good exerted by the nurse upon those with whom she is brought in contact. To this branch no more appropriate name can be given than "instructive nursing," for educational, in the best sense of the word, it should be.

In the trained nurse then the public is by degrees coming to recognize a person of peculiar position and usefulness in the organization of society. She has her place—the wonder is that she has been so long in coming to it—she is no longer the willing hand of the pitiful heart, the soother of the fevered brow; she is far more, for to the willingness of the hands she has added experience, while to the pity of the heart she has added knowledge thus increasing an hundredfold her power for good. No longer can she with justice be regarded as a better trained, more useful servant, but as one who has knowledge and is worthy of respect, consideration and proper recompense as being in a certain degree a member of a profession.

There are some of the essentials in nursing by which it has come to be looked upon as a profession,—sufficient truly, did we all possess them, to rank us high among those established in bygone centuries. Wherein, then, do we fail to meet these high obligations? To begin with the nurse is only mortal and must of necessity share some of the infirmities of her fellowmen which prevent the accomplishment of perfect work. But surely every-

thing should be done to minimize these imperfections and one crying evil, which calls loudly for reform, may be mentioned here.

No Standard for Nurses. Unfortunately at present there exists no legally recognized standard for nurses; there is no law similar to those dealing with the medical profession, which requires that a trained nurse shall have spent a certain definite time in a recognized general hospital, that she shall have had certain definite instruction in special studies and methods relating to the care of the sick, that she shall be required to pass specified examinations, and shall hold a certificate, before she is lawfully entitled to practice her profession. As a consequence, we find schools for nurses established in all kinds and conditions of hospitals, all grades of instruction given and all manner of women practicing both in and out of hospitals. If a pupil is dismissed for cause from a high grade school, it will be usually found that she is accepted into some other school, where they are glad to get any one to do the nursing work, whence in due course she graduates as a trained nurse; worse still, who can prevent her from beginning to do private duty at once and from posing as a hospital nurse? With hundreds, or indeed thousands, of these so-called nurses claiming sisterhood with those who have spent time and money and strength in preparing themselves for their work, and with the sometimes imperfect nursing of the regular graduate, what wonder that the name and the presence of the trained nurse do not always carry with them the sense of confidence and comfort that should legally belong to them? So long as we are without some recognized standard to which each so-called trained nurse should be required to come up, so long shall we be unable to qualify as forming a profession, for the criticisms so often heard are in the main just; the levelling process brings all down, the competent nurse being confused in the minds of the public with the inefficient and the woman of commercial mind.

I am sure that even the best among us are ready to acknowledge our imperfections, and the steady hard work that has been done in the past ten years and the continued effort towards improve-

ment shows a healthy dissatisfaction, which augurs well for the betterment of the future nurse, and proves that we at least appreciate the fact that for the care of the sick every year a higher training is being surely and steadily demanded, and that only a high order of woman can meet these requirements.

A Code of Ethics. But it still remains for me to speak briefly of another phase to nursing, without which the professional side would be dead and spiritless. A well defined code of ethics is also one of our needs as a profession. From this ethical standpoint nursing is a *calling* and should be a consecrated service, performed in the Spirit of Christ who made himself of no account, but went about doing good. The women who fail to bring this spirit into their work, miss the thing of greatest value that is to be found in it, and too often prove deserving of the criticism that the life is apt to make a woman hard, cold and mercenary. The scientific, the educational side is important, and can hardly receive too much consideration, but equally with it should each nurse see to it that the spirit of love for the work's sake is fostered and developed; for if this be neglected we can never hope to possess a professional code of an eminently practical and helpful nature.

In these few words I have endeavored to bring before you some of the responsibilities and privileges that each of you and all other graduates assume. Remember that this high conception of our work carries with it the obligation that every individual by her actions and by her personal character shall maintain its dignity untarnished. To bring to it any less than the very best that is in you will cause it to sink in the eyes of the public and bring discredit both upon it and upon you. Let each member of the first class to graduate from the Albany Hospital see to it that she takes away with her and jealously guards an individual high standard and interest in her work without which she can never justly claim to be a member of the profession of trained nursing.

ADDRESS TO THE GRADUATES.*

By A. VANDER VEER, M. D.,

Professor of Surgery, Albany Medical College.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen and Graduates of the Albany Training School for Nurses:

I believe this to be a day of rejoicings and congratulations on the part of the citizens of Albany. Regarding myself, I wish to express my feelings of gratitude for the joy I experience in being present and occupying the position I do, hopes realized and prayers answered.

During the past forty years it has been my good fortune to witness the development of woman's work in many new fields, and in all these new departures I have seen her faithfully fulfilling her mission. I believe she is fitted for many spheres of activity but partially occupied at present, and I am frank to say that in no profession is woman able to do so much for the world at large as in the field of skilled nursing.

On the very ground we occupy to-day, twenty-eight years ago, within a few days, I witnessed the first beneficial effect of female nursing in the care of the sick and wounded soldiers of our, then, Civil War.

At that time I had a very vivid recollection of the early work done by the revered Florence Nightingale, during the Crimean War. How well do I remember the praises and credit then shown her by the civilized world.

Later I had an opportunity of witnessing the kind attention given to our soldiers by patriotic women in charge of large military hospitals, in field hospitals, and even up to line of battle itself.

After the close of the war it was my good fortune to observe the work of the intelligent, educated nurses in many of the hospitals abroad, and in our own land.

*Delivered at the graduating exercises of the Class of 1900 of the Albany Hospital Training School for Nurses, May 10, 1900.

It created in me a great desire to have a training school in connection with our own Albany Hospital, but that desire was not fulfilled until your present Board of Lady Patronesses was organized, and to them—their efforts being endorsed by the Board of Governors—are we indebted to-day, in seeing the fruition, and full development of our hopes. Congratulations, therefore, are to be extended to the Board of Governors, and especially to the Lady Patronesses for their liberal contribution of funds, and their indefatigable industry in organizing and supporting this school.

Congratulations are due our superintendent, for her success in aiding to bring the school to its present high plane.

Congratulations must be extended to the people of Albany and surrounding country upon so good a school having been organized, fully abreast of, and embodying all the modern ideas and rules that control the well-regulated institutions of to-day, which are to supply us with the best and most conscientious nursing.

Congratulations to the medical staff of lecturers who have instructed so earnestly, and now see the good results of their labors; to the other members of the medical profession, who are to have the privilege of introducing into the sick rooms of their patients kind, faithful, well-trained nurses.

And last, but not least, congratulations to you young women, who comprise the first class graduated from this well-equipped school. You have now presented to you, in the exercises of to-day, with your diplomas, that which entitles you to go forth in your chosen profession, to battle against disease in all its forms, to afford comfort, hope and cheer to the saddened household, to bring back to life's duties many whose light of life would have gone out but for your skill, and to reap, somewhat, the encouragement and credit of your many years of hard work. I say your profession, for I am earnest in emphasizing this. It is a profession and should be recognized as such by the State; a profession that requires the very best woman, and the best of that woman. That the profession of nursing is an honored one is

shown by our own Capitol in history. Between Mollie Pitcher and Clara Barton is the medallion of Mrs. Spencer, the famous army nurse of Oswego.

We are now trusting our patients, and our loved ones, to the care of the trained nurse in a manner that one would hardly have believed possible fifteen years ago. We should see that you are properly trained, properly instructed and qualified for your work.

Few in this audience know so well as myself the courage and perseverance that has been required on your part to entitle you to graduate as a trained nurse.

From probationer to pupil student, from pupil student to junior, from junior to senior year; from senior year to head nurse in charge of the wards, from head nurse to night superintendent, and assistant superintendent, I have been a careful observer of your faithful work, and watched you amidst your many cares and anxieties.

How little the public will ever know of your disagreeable duties as probationer and pupil student! How your cares and responsibilities increased as you became full-fledged students! How as assistant and head nurses you realized more and more what a world of responsibility you were assuming, and when as special nurses you had the full care of the precious life entrusted to your keeping! I can bear witness to your weary, anxious look, when some recent case for days and sleepless nights had taxed your physical and mental strength to the utmost. I can also rejoice with you, as you look back and remember how this, and many another patient recovered, as the result of your watchfulness, and untiring efforts.

You have listened to a most admirable address by one fully competent, and who is an authority in your profession. I shall not attempt to add to what she has already so well expressed. There are, perhaps, two or three points from my professional standpoint that may not be amiss. Remember you should ever realize that "health is your capital." "Make it your study and establish faithfully your worship. Without health you cannot

work, and certainly cannot do justice to those who are suffering, and under your care." It has been well said that "attention to health is not selfishness." "Labor and rest are twins, and respect to health laws is quite different from self-coddling. Mental health is as necessary as physical, for it conduces to the latter; unless the worker goes cheerfully to her task she becomes worn out, for it is a detriment to have a mind troubled with many things."

"Another kernel of advice is to be businesslike," and which applies with great force to the profession of nursing. "There is a conviction among men that women are unpunctual and irresponsible." Nursing may be made congenial, but it is not to be taken up lightly and those who become paid workers must put away all thought of sex and realize that in a contract "value received" relates to both parties. "One of the most important principles of business is promptness, another energy, another ambition, and an untiring zeal that is willing to sacrifice the lighter things of life and expend all time and strength upon work." "What becomes of my social position," ask those who have not had their fill of accustomed gaities? "The question settles itself by change of taste. Caste is not lost by earnest employment; the world of society is not cruel enough to turn a woman off because she has taken up a serious and obvious duty, but she needs her time and strength for her work, and so there comes divergence of interest, and separation from all save the choicest friends. But the compensation lies in the fact that the pleasures of labor are keener than those of indolence, and the lives of workers are full and rich past comprehending by the uninitiated."

To nurse the injured back to health, to cool the burnings of fever, to stay and allay the pains of disease is a work worthy the noblest efforts of humanity, and a pleasure to those of fine sensibilities and sympathetic hearts.

The intelligence of the nurse is one of the important factors in her future success. From year to year as new fields are opened up more is required of the nurse; more responsibility is thrown upon her. As I have stated in a previous address, she is becoming

a large factor in the evolution of the hospital, and also in the evolution of modern surgery.

While it is true that theoretical work is very important—as it must and does develop the woman—yet it can also be truly said that with the advanced educational requirements in the profession of nursing, which are so essential, a practical course of study, and experience in modern hospital work, becomes absolutely necessary.

How much we owe those who have given so liberally to this noble institution and its humane purpose! But for the interest manifested in this hospital by the citizens of Albany, you, who about to go forth from its doors to-day, would not have the pleasant memories you now possess of your Alma Mater.

Work, good work, both by physician and nurse, has been accomplished in the face of difficulties that did not promise well for the patient, but to you have been given opportunities of having duty made pleasanter, work more congenial, results the best, because of your modern methods of instruction.

Friends in abundance you have made among those to whom you have ministered, pleasant memories of your instructors, because of the desire on your part to achieve the best capable in your profession, and although there must, necessarily, have been unpleasant episodes during the years spent in daily, yea! hourly toil, yet in the time to come teacher and pupil will look back with pleasure and interest to your Alma Mater.

The best wishes of all connected with the Albany Hospital Training School for Nurses go with you in whatever direction your chosen life's work may take you.

“Go labor on, spend and be spent,
Thy joy to do the Master's will.”

ADDRESS AND PRESENTATION OF DIPLOMAS.*

BY HON. WILLIAM L. LEARNED, LL. D.

Young Ladies of the Graduating Class:

The school which was organized in connection with this hospital for the training of nurses is now about to graduate you, its first class. By the instruction and the practice which you have had you have been fitted, in the judgment of your teachers, for the very important duty of nursing the sick. How important that has become in modern times you know better than I do. The discovery of the need of the utmost cleanliness in the sick room, and the whole subject of aseptic treatment have given an importance to the office of the nurse which it did not formerly possess. The days of the nurse caricatured by Dickens in "Sairey Gamp" have gone, never to return; and the nurse has taken her place close to that of the physician and the surgeon, their services may sometimes be even more valuable than theirs. For it must be acknowledged that our friends, the doctors, are somewhat given to experimenting upon us, while your course of treatment is substantially the same, alas. They have a mania about making an experiment on a worthless body—and I fear that they consider all bodies as worthless!

Into this important, this sacred position, you are about to enter, a position where human life may depend upon your faithful care and may be sacrificed by your forgetfulness or neglect. Feel deeply the responsibility which rests upon you. Slight mistakes or a little carelessness on your part may cause evil which will fill the rest of your lives with deep remorse.

The border of the seal of this school has the words: "I was sick and ye visited me." Remember that more words are followed by these: "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it to me." So when you stand by the bed of a patient keep in mind that your care is expended not merely upon

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the poor human body before you, but that it reaches that Divine life which once bore the sufferings to which we are subject. So should you be patient with the unreasonableness of the sick and endure your own weariness without complaint.

For doubtless times will come to you when the continued care of the sick and suffering will be felt in its effects on yourselves; and the monotony of life will be experienced. It may then be hard without some such thought as I have suggested, to maintain constantly a cheerful and pleasant demeanor in the rooms of sickness. Yet you must strive for this. And your own pleasing mood and happy spirits may be for those under your care a better tonic than can be bought at a druggist's. And as in the early days of Christianity, the shadow of St. Peter passing by brought health to the sick who had been laid along the streets, so shall your mere presence bring to your patients a breath of comfort and consolation which shall revive their fainting strength and arouse hope in their desponding hearts.

In the hope that such may be your experience, it gives me pleasure on behalf of the training school to present you your diplomas.

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Superintendent of Nurses and Nursing

MISS EMILY MACDONNELL

ALBANY HOSPITAL TRAINING SCHOOL FOR NURSES

The training school for nurses was organized in December, 1896, and incorporated in April, 1897. Its objects are the improvement of the nursing service in the Albany Hospital and the education of trained nurses for the needs of Albany and vicinity. A three year course of instruction has been adopted, including lectures by the members of the medical and surgical staffs of the hospital and other physicians, recitations to the Superintendent of Nurses, and practical ward instruction in the care of the sick and injured and in midwifery under the direction of graduate nurses specially selected for ability in this line of work. A registry bureau for qualified nurses is being established.

Pupils are received as probationers, and after acceptance by the Superintendent of Nurses enter upon the regular course of study.

No fees are charged for instruction, the services rendered in the wards of the hospital being accepted as an equivalent. An allowance of seven dollars a month for necessary expenses, clothing, books, etc., is granted the pupils of the school.

No applicants are considered who do not express their willingness and intention to remain throughout the full course of three years. For information address

Miss EMILY MACDONNELL,

Superintendent of Nurses,

Albany Hospital, New Scotland Ave.,

Albany, N. Y.

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