

OPEN LETTERS.

The Connecticut Training School for Nurses.*

[NEW HAVEN HOSPITAL.]

A NEW idea usually finds simultaneous development in several directions, and it is rare that one person alone is the discoverer. The common parent of American hospital schools is the Nightingale Memorial of St. Thomas's Hospital, London; but the plan for their organization here was common to several communities. For example, the New Haven School was developed, a small endowment raised, and the charter obtained, simultaneously with the Bellevue Hospital school—though chance prevented the reception of pupils in New Haven until six months later.

A school of the size of the New Haven School, adapted to the wants of a comparatively small hospital, stands in relation to similar organizations in large charity hospitals as the private select school does to the large public ones in the common-school system. In a hospital of only one hundred and sixty beds, there is no great mass of sick to care for; nurses have time to study the accomplishments of their profession, and lady visitors and managers are able to give personal attention and supervision to the classes. That the results are favorable is shown in the New Haven School by the number, in proportion to the graduate, who have been called to fill positions of trust in other hospitals, nearly one-fourth having been given the supervision of nursing in hospitals, in New Haven, New York City, Brooklyn, Pittsfield (Massachusetts), Boston, and the States of New Jersey, Indiana, Ohio, Vermont, and Virginia. The growth of the school in public favor is shown by the constantly increasing demand for nurses for private families, two-thirds in excess of the provision, and also by the applications for admissions, which at the present moment are greatly in excess of the vacancies. Another proof of the favor with which the enterprise is regarded is found in the liberal way in which money has lately been contributed to build in the hospital inclosure a nurses' home, now finished and occupied, having accommodations for thirty,—a handsome, ample three-story brick building, with cheerful parlors, single bedrooms, bathrooms, piazzas, etc., well-warmed, ventilated, and lighted, which—it may be useful to those engaged in similar undertakings to know—has been substantially and satisfactorily completed at an outside cost of \$11,800.

It might be supposed that the New Haven School, comparatively small as it is, would have a local reputation only; it is noticeable, however, that young women all over the country are increasingly interested in the new profession open to them, and anxious to collect information concerning all the schools. Thus far the following places have been represented in the New Haven School by accepted pupils: Connecticut, Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts,

Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Georgia, Illinois, Wisconsin, Washington, Canada, Nova Scotia, and Australia. Trained nurses have been sent on application to all the New England States, New York, Florida, and Virginia, and on graduation have scattered to all quarters, from Canada to California. For the benefit of those who may be desirous of connecting a nursing school with smaller hospitals than those found in our large cities, it may be useful to give the points of difference between the New Haven organization and similar undertakings in New York and Boston.

The New Haven School is in charge of a president, vice-presidents, general treasurer, and auditors, and a committee of twenty-one ladies and gentlemen, five being physicians, two of whom are connected with the hospital staff; this makes a connecting link between the ladies' committee and medical and other male boards of hospital management. The gentleman who is the general treasurer pays out to the sub-treasurer, who is a lady, the funds necessary for the current expense of the school, which she accounts for, making weekly payments to the nurses. The secretary, another member of the ladies' committee, conducts all the correspondence with applicants, accepts them if they answer the requirements, and notifies the lady superintendent when to expect new arrivals. The assumption by the ladies' committee of all these duties relieves the superintendent of much outside responsibility and gives her time for her legitimate duties as instructor of the pupils in the wards. That the pupils may be under the best teaching it is required that the superintendent of nursing and her assistant shall themselves be ladies of thorough hospital training, knowing the theory and practice of skillful nursing, and able to recognize at once bungling work on the part of the pupils and to set them right.

In a small hospital it is unnecessary that ward head-nurses should be employed, as in large institutions, at an increased expense. Here the senior nurse in each ward is in that position, at the ordinary payment. Each pupil, coming in turn to be senior nurse, gains greatly in self-possession and quick perception—faculties which are required in this responsible position.

The hospital contributes nothing towards the payment of the nurses; that is attended to by the society. The table for the school is, however, provided by the hospital; and the officers, relieved from the daily cares of housekeeping, give their whole time to the supervision of the nursing. Differing again from other schools, the course of instruction here is shortened to nineteen months,—thirteen spent in hospital and six at private nursing; this private nursing is required of all pupils.

In this way the school receives additions to its funds in payments from families, and the committee know from actual trial and report whether the nurse is entitled to her diploma. The exigencies of very large hospitals make it necessary often to decline to send nurses to private families. The New Haven School re-

* For a description of the interesting work of the Bellevue Hospital (New York) Training School for Nurses see THE CENTURY for November, 1882.—EDITOR.

quires that all should serve in this way for six months, their places in the hospital being taken by new pupils. In all these ways—in the absence of increased payments toward head-nurses, and of housekeeping cares, and in the requirement of nursing in private families—the school finds an advantage over other systems. One other difference is in the form of graduation papers. Each graduate receives with her diploma a printed statement of her standing in the school during her course of study, and the seal of the school is not affixed to the diploma until one year after graduation. At this time, the self-reliance of the nurse having been tested for this additional twelve months, a certain number of testimonials from physicians are required to be returned with the diploma for final action, and if a majority of the committee so decide the seal is affixed.

The course of instruction consists of careful teaching in the ward by the lady superintendent, recitations held daily from text-books, lectures, autopsies, attendance at surgical operations, and three weeks or more spent in the diet kitchen. Quarterly examinations are held and a prize is given for the best recitation. Examinations for diplomas are conducted by one of the physicians of the committee.

The school has published a hand-book of nursing, which is in use in the hospital schools of New York, Brooklyn, Chicago, Washington, and Orange, and in one of the large English hospital schools. It may be an encouragement to other schools in their beginning to see at the close of ten years how far a little candle throws its beams.

It is important to those about organizing a nursing school to lay special stress upon the need of strong health in their pupils. Only about one-third of all the accepted pupils of the New Haven School have finished their hospital course; and the cause of failure in a large majority of cases has been ill health. The work makes a drain upon the system mentally and physically, and it often happens that physicians who do not understand the wearing nature of hospital life will certify to the physical fitness of a young woman who in six months' time breaks down entirely, and the result is loss of health to her and loss of time and money to the school. Some applicants who bring clean bills of health from home are pronounced by our own physician unequal to the strain.

One other difference between this school and others is in the requirement that at the close of a year's hospital life the pupils shall take a month's vacation, to be spent away from the hospital. This is considered necessary, in order that pupils may go in a good physical condition to their nursing in private families.

The "sources of financial support" are a small endowment and payments made by families for the services of nurses.

There is no hospital too small to furnish useful training to at least three or four pupil nurses, and all over the country there is a demand for skilled services in illness.

The New Haven School began in a very small way a few years ago, with six pupils, and has now over forty under its control, with a graduate list of more than one hundred. What is a far better test of success, however, than mere numbers, is the wide reputation it has secured for faithful training; and this reputation can be obtained by even the smallest cottage hospital.

In the Chilcat Country.

ALASKA is a land of winter shadow and summer sun. Appointed by the Board of Presbyterian Home Missions to establish its farthest outpost in the country of the Chilcats, we left our old Middle State home in the early part of May, 1881, and sailed from San Francisco on the 21st. At that time there was no such thing as a "through steamer."

On reaching Sitka, June 11th, with the expectation of getting out almost immediately to our post, we heard that two powerful families of the Chilcats (the Crows and the Whales) were engaged in war, and that we would not be permitted to enter the field until there was some promise of peace. However, after a month's detention, we were allowed to proceed, and on the evening of July 18th the little trading vessel cast anchor. After plunging through the surf of Portage Bay, we set our feet upon the beautiful shore of Da-shu—the site of the mission village of Haines.

From Portage Bay west to the Chilcat River and southward to the point, lies the largest tract of arable land, so far as my knowledge goes, in south-eastern Alaska, while the climate does not differ greatly from that of Pennsylvania. Though the winters are longer and the snows deeper, the thermometer never falls as low as it does sometimes at home,—there are no such sudden and constant changes,—and the air is salt and clear as crystal. Our first snow fell on the 10th of October, and we never saw the ground again until May. In the month of February alone we had eighteen and three-fourths feet of snow-fall, and for months it lay from eight to twelve feet in depth. Here summer reaches perfection, never sultry, rarely chilling. During the winter months the sun lingers behind the eastern range till nearly noon; then, barely lifting his lazy head above the southern peak for two or three hours, sinks again into the sleepy west and leaves us a night of twenty-one hours.

But in May the world and the sun wake up together. In his new zeal we find old Sol up before us at 2:15 A. M., and he urges us on till 9:45 at night. Even then the light is only turned down,—for the darkest hour is light early summer twilight, not too dark for reading.

From our front door to the pebbly beach below, the wild sweet-pea runs rampant, while under, and in, and through it spring the luxuriant phlox, Indian rice, the white-blossomed "yun-ate," ferns, and wild roses which make redolent every breath from the bay. Passing out the back door, a few steps lead us into the dense pine woods, whose solitudes are peopled with great bears, and owls, and —Kling-get ghosts! while eagles and ravens soar without number. On one tree alone we counted thirty bald eagles. These trees are heavily draped with moss, hanging in rich festoons from every limb; and into the rich carpeting underneath one's foot may sink for inches. Here the ferns reach mammoth size, though many of fairy daintiness are found among the moss; and the devil's walking-stick stands in royal beauty at every turn, with its broad, graceful leaves and waxen red berries.

Out again into the sunshine and we discover meadows—of grass and clover, through which run bright little streams, grown over with willows just as at home. And here and there are clumps of trees, so like the peach and apple that a lump comes into your