

Lady Dufferin and the Women of India.



THE National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India owes its origin to a wish on the part of Her Majesty the Queen-Empress to ameliorate the condition of the native women of India ; and when Her Excellency, the Countess of Dufferin and Ava, before her departure for India, took leave of Her Majesty, the matter was discussed and left in Lady Dufferin's hands. To better hands it could not have been entrusted, and this noble lady adopted every means of ascertaining in what direction, and by what means, the wishes of Her Majesty could most effectually be carried out.

The universal want of skilled medical aid for native women, whom male physicians are not permitted to attend, presented itself as the desired avenue. The ablest statesman would have been appalled, and the most ardent philanthropist would have hesitated, before an undertaking so vast as one that had for its object the providing for the physical well-being of 100,000, 000 women. Where was the wherewithal to come from, and how were the ignorance, superstition, and the prejudices of caste to be overcome? The "Where" and the "How" were carefully considered, formidable obstacles overcome, and the experiment made: how well it has succeeded I will try to show.

The National Association for Supplying

Medical Aid to the Women of India was founded in 1885. Her Majesty the Queen-Empress was its patron, the Governors and Lieutenant-Governors were vice-patrons. Life councillors, life members, and ordinary members were to be enrolled according to the amount of their donations. The general affairs of the Association were to be managed by a central committee, and efforts were to be made to establish branches throughout the country. The money subscribed to the National Association was to be called the "Countess of Dufferin's Fund."

Early in the year five and a half lakhs of rupees were invested as an endowment fund, and the society was registered. By permission of the Home Department of the Government of India, the Surgeon-General aids the society in the selection

of the most suitable women for medical services, and they are grouped as follows:—

(1) Lady doctors registered under the Medical Acts of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, or possessing such certificates as would entitle them to such registration.

(2) Female assistant surgeons.

(3) Female hospital assistants.

The women, receiving a little more pay than men, in the same grades in the Government Medical Services, because they will have no pension, nor a regularly increasing salary.

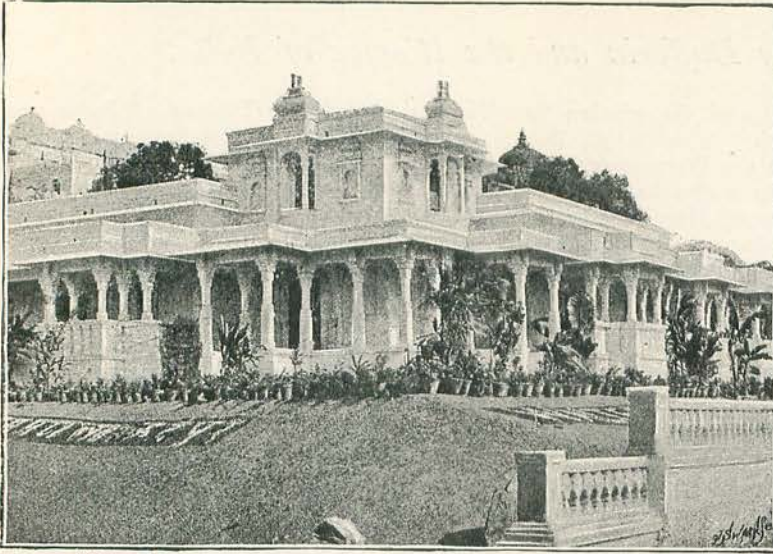
The lady doctors who are brought from England receive, in addition to their passage and an allowance for outfit, Rs. 300



From a Photo. by Bourne]

LADY DUFFERIN.

[& Shepherd, Calcutta.



[From a Phototype by]

THE WALTER HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN, OODEYPORE.

[R. Holtz, Calcutta.]

per month, with quarters, and they are allowed to have a private practice as well. The Association was to be unsectarian, catholic, and universal. Its aim was—

Firstly.—To provide medical tuition for native female students.

Secondly.—Medical relief, by establishing female hospitals and dispensaries, and the placing of lady doctors in different towns or districts.

Thirdly.—Supplying trained nurses and *accoucheuses* for women and children in hospitals and private houses.

How nobly—in spite of opposition and jealousy—the Association is steadily advancing will be seen from the following :—

There are thirteen lady doctors, twenty-seven assistant surgeons and female medical practitioners, now working in connection with the fund, and 204 pupils studying at the medical colleges, and schools, in India. Boarding houses have also been established for the students, where, under a lady, they can be trained in habits of self-respect, gentleness, and dignity, and where they can be safely protected on their entrance into a comparatively public life, from one of convent-like seclusion. That the female medical students are doing well is conclusively proved by the reports. At Hyderabad, Dr. Lawrie says : “Two of the lady students beat the whole of the male students, and secured the first places in their class at the half-yearly competitive examination.”

The Nizam's Government is sending

these two young ladies — one of whom is a Parsee — to England to complete their medical education.

Over twelve lakhs of rupees have been spent in the erection of buildings especially adapted for affording medical relief to native women. The number of women who received medical aid during the year 1890 were 411,000. The princes and chiefs of India from the

first, fully recognised the value of Lady Dufferin's noble work, and have warmly supported it. Among the most munificent donors are the Maharaja of Jeypore, the Nizam of Hyderabad, and the Maharaja of Ulwar. In 1886 the Begum of Bhopal opened a female dispensary and school, and the Nizam of Hyderabad founded six scholarships and started female medical classes in his State.

In 1888 the Dufferin Hospital at Nagpur was opened, having cost Rs. 30,000, all subscribed by Indian nobles ; there is also the Walter Hospital at Oodeypore, the Lady Lyall boarding-house for students attending the Lahore Medical College, towards which the Maharaja of Kashmir gave Rs. 50,000 ; the Victoria Hospital at Kotah, the Lady Dufferin Hospital at Patiala, the Maternity Hospital at Agra, the Ishwari Hospital at Benares, and the Lady Dufferin Zenana Hospital at Calcutta.

It is impossible for Englishwomen to realise the condition and sufferings of their unhappy sisters in India before Lady Dufferin started her grand crusade on their behalf ; the thousands of lives yearly sacrificed, the wholesale murder of infants, and the lifelong injuries inflicted on the mothers—who are little more than infants themselves—through the ignorance and the inhuman practices of the dhais (*accoucheuses*).

Lady Dufferin, when giving me a brief account of her work, was anxious that I should mention the earlier efforts of the



From a Phototype by

STUDENTS AT THE CAMPBELL MEDICAL HALL, CALCUTTA.

[R. Holz, Calcutta.]

Zenana Mission, which, she said, "paved the way for the National Association." Instead of weakening and opposing existing charities and societies, the Association has been instrumental in assisting and stimulating them, and supplying a common centre of reference and communication.

Lady Reay, during her residence in Bombay, rendered valuable aid in promoting the means of giving female medical aid to the native women; her sympathy and philanthropic activity were unceasing, and productive of good results. The marvellous increase of special hospitals for women, of women's and of children's wards, is mostly due to native liberality. Lady Reay in 1890 laid the foundation-stone of the "Awabai Bhownaggree Home for Nurses." This institution — the first of its kind in India — was intended as a home where native nurses could receive instruc-

tion in their duties. It was erected from a joint fund set apart by Government and Mr. M. M. Bhownaggree, C.I.E., in memory of his sister, Miss Awabai Bhownaggree, a beautiful and accomplished Parsee lady, greatly esteemed and much beloved in the highest and most select circles in Europe, as well as in her own country. Her sudden death at the age of nine-

teen was regarded as a national loss. Her charming vivacity and high intellectual gifts made her a universal favourite. During her last visit to England, in 1866, she was received by Her Majesty the Queen. The Home, which cost Rs. 30,000, half of which was contributed by Mr. M. M. Bhownaggree, was formally opened by His Excellency Lord Harris, on February 17, 1891, and contains accommodation for twenty nurses. The sanitation and ventilation are perfect; sepa-



From a Phototype by

CLASS OF KAREN PUPILS AT THE DUFFERIN MATERNITY HOSPITAL, RANGOON.

[R. Holz, Calcutta.]

rate quarters are provided for Parsees, Hindoos, and Mahomedans. The building is faced with blue stone, with dressings and carvings in Porebunder stone. The entrance portico is supported by massive pillars with carved capitals; the rooms open out of a spacious corridor. It will ever remain as a touching tribute from a sorrowing and affectionate brother to the memory of a deeply loved and only sister. No more fitting memorial could have been thought of, for Miss Awabai Bhownaggee's short life had been one of indefatigable labour in promoting works of public charity. Thus has Lady Dufferin's Association given an impetus to native efforts, and opened out a great field for the future.

In spite of the deep-rooted prejudice against Western medical and surgical methods, the number of women who daily seek aid and relief in the hospitals, and from lady doctors, prove how sorely such aid was needed, and the need is growing; more hospitals, more efficient doctors and nurses are required, consequently the Fund at the disposal of the Association must be correspondingly increased by annual subscriptions and donations.

Lady Dufferin, in her interesting book, "A Record of Three Years' Work," mentions that a mahant (a Hindu high priest)

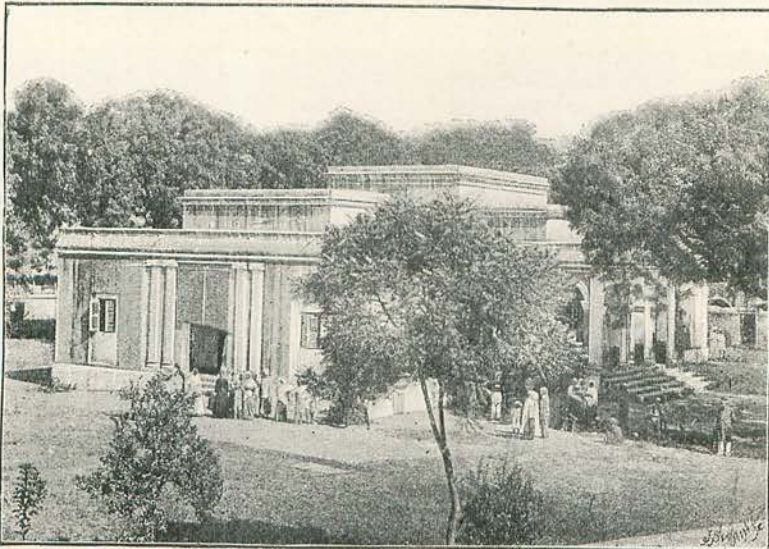
gave a handsome donation to the Fund, and also offered two scholarships for hospital assistants, two gold medals and two scholarships for *accoucheuses*. In addition to this he promised to pay half the salary, and to provide hospital accommodation, for an apothecary or hospital assistant, if one could be found to go to his native town.

"One touch of Nature makes the whole world kin." This great work deserves national aid; at least every woman in England should consider it a privilege to help in such a cause, and to contribute voluntarily some sum, however small, towards advocating "Women's Rights," not in the modern sense of the term, but in its holiest and purest meaning.

"The right—ah, best and sweetest!—
To stand all undismayed,
Whenever sorrow, want, or sin,
Call for a woman's aid."

The cries of suffering womanhood in India are loud enough to reach the hearts of their English sisters. Shall they remain unheeded?

To Lady Dufferin and her co-workers India owes an infinite debt of gratitude, and an everlasting memorial is raised to them in the hearts of those they have benefited, as well as those who honour and appreciate their unceasing efforts.



From a Phototype by

[R. Holt, Calcutta,
DUFFERIN HOSPITAL (MAIN BUILDING), BAREILLY (N.W. PROVINCES).