THE REFORM OF SICK NURSING AND THE
LATE MRS. WARDROPER.

By FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

THE EXTINCTION OF MRS. GAMP.

ONE has passed away without noise, without crown or sceptre of martyrdom, who was the pioneer of hospital nursing, the first lay hospital matron, at least of a great public hospital, who was a gentlewoman. Her kingdom was that of the sick. No public press heroine was she; yet countless sick will bless her name though they never heard it, and she opened a new calling for women of all classes, the Nursing Institutions for the Poor. She did this—a great work—for her country and her Sovereign, who is the mother of English-speaking woman-kind, thrice blessed to those for whom it initiated a divine life of common sense in nursing. No Mrs. Gamp could live in her neighbourhood; Mrs. Gamp was extinct for ever. She was soon gladly acknowledged by the doctors as their chief in nursing. She led a hard life, but never proclaimed it. What she did was done silently. No herald chanted her praises.

The state of what was by ignorance called nursing when she began hospital work, the miserable state, moral and technical, of the nurses, would scarcely now be credited. Did one, who knew it, attempt to describe it, she would be, by a universal jury of her fellows, found guilty of exaggeration. But God knew it.

REFORMS AT ST. THOMAS'S.

I saw her first in October, 1854, when the expedition of nurses was sent to the Crimean war. She had been then nine months matron of the great hospital in London, of which for thirty-three years she remained head and reformer of the nursing. Training was then unknown. The only nurse worthy of the name that could be given to that expedition, though several were supplied, was a "sister" who had been pensioned some time before, and who proved invaluable. I saw her next after the conclusion of the Crimean war. She had already made her mark. She had weeded out the inefficient, morally and technically; she had obtained better women as nurses; she had put her finger on some of the most flagrant blots, such as the night nursing, and where she laid her finger the blot was diminished as far as possible, but no training had yet been thought of.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NIGHTINGALE SCHOOL.

All this led to her being chosen to carry out in the hospital of which she was matron the aims, in the training of nurses, of the Nightingale Fund, which had then been subscribed. She was named first superintendent of that school, and continued such for twenty-seven years till her retirement in 1887. That school under her has been more or less the model of all the subsequent nurse-training schools, of which now nearly every considerable hospital, and many an inconsiderable, has its own, but they chiefly train for themselves; she, as head of the Nightingale School, trained for many other hospitals and infirmaries. The principles of this school may be shortly said to be as follows:—(1) That nurses should have their technical training in hospitals specially organised for the purpose; (2) that they should live in a "home" fit to form their moral life and discipline.

THE WORK OF THE SCHOOL.

The school under this lady was opened at the old St. Thomas's Hospital, near London Bridge, in 1860. St. Thomas's and the Nightingale School were removed to the Surrey Gardens in 1862, and in 1870 to their present abode opposite the Houses of Parliament on the other side of the river. At the time of her retirement upwards of 500 nurses had completed their course in the school, and entered into service on the staff of St. Thomas's and other hospitals; and of these over 50 educated gentlewomen were occupying important posts as matrons or superintendents of nurses in hospitals, infirmaries, and nursing institutions for the poor, and not only in the United Kingdom, but also abroad.

THE METHODS AND CHARACTER OF MRS. WARDROPER.

This lady was Mrs. Wardroper, who passed away, quite peacefully, in her 80th year, on December 15th, 1892, and was

buried quietly on December 19th. It is difficult to describe the character of such a woman, the more so as her praises were never sounded in newspaper or book. No laurel encircled her brow, no crowds assemble to do her honour. But hundreds of trained nurses, and hundreds of thousands of well-nursed sick are her meet tribute.

Her power of organisation and of administration, her courage and her discrimination in character were alike remarkable. She was straightforward, true, upright; she was decided; her judgment of character came by intuition, at a flash, not the result of much weighing or consideration, yet she seldom made a mistake; and she would take the greatest pains with her written delineations of character required for records, writing them again and again in order to be perfectly just, not smart or clever; but they were in excellent language. She was free from self-consciousness; nothing artificial about her. "She did nothing because she was being looked at, and abstained from nothing because she was looked at."

Her whole heart and mind, her whole life and strength were in the work she had undertaken. She never went a-pleasuring; seldom into society. Yet she was one of the wittiest people one could hear on a summer's day, and had gone a good deal into society in her unmarried life. She was left a widow at 42 with a young family. She had never had any training in hospital life. There was none to be had.

Her force of character was extraordinary; her word was law. For her thoughts, words, and actions were all the same. She moved in one piece. She talked a great deal, but she never wasted herself in talking; she did what she said. Some people substitute words for actions; *she* never. She knew what she wanted, and she did it. She was a strict disciplinarian; very kind, often affectionate, rather than loving. She took such intense interest in everything, even in things matrons do not generally consider their business, that she never tired. She would be quite late in decorating the chapel at Christmas and Easter with her own hands. She had great taste, and spent her own money. She was a thorough gentlewoman, nothing mean or low about her; magnanimous and generous, rather than courteous.

And all this was done quietly. Of late years the great nursing work has been scarred by fashion on one side, and by mere money-getting on the other—two catastrophes sure to happen when noise is substituted for silent work. Few remember her in these express-train days, dashing along at 60 years in a day.

A perfect woman, nobly planned
To warn, to comfort and command.

"Comfort," not in the present meaning of comfortable, easy-chair life, but comfort in the good old meaning of "Be strong with me."

And so, dear Matron, as thou wast called so many years, we bid thee farewell, and God-speed to His higher world; not as the world giveth, giveth He thee.

THE GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL AND
MEDICAL AID ASSOCIATIONS

The Committee on Medical Aid Associations of the General Medical Council have issued a circular letter to all medical officers of medical aid associations containing a series of questions as to the mode in which these associations are carried on and their relation to their medical officers. We give below a copy of these questions. It will be seen that they are of a comprehensive character. The Committee has held two meetings, and by issuing this circular letter it "proposes to learn as much as possible without troubling the officers of the associations to give evidence in person."

The Committee "will be glad to have" their answers if they "see no objection to giving them," and the answers will be regarded as strictly confidential if so desired; names mentioned will not be divulged without permission. The Committee also ask for copies of annual reports, especially the earliest and latest. Communications, in reply, should be addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on Medical Aid Associations, The General Medical Council Office, 299, Oxford Street, London, W.—The members of the Committee are Dr. J. G. Glover (Chairman), Mr. Wheelhouse, Mr. Teale, Dr. Leech, Dr. Bruce, and Dr. MacAlister.