

PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENTS

IN CHARGE OF
LUCY L. DROWN

WORK FOR NURSES IN PLAY-SCHOOLS

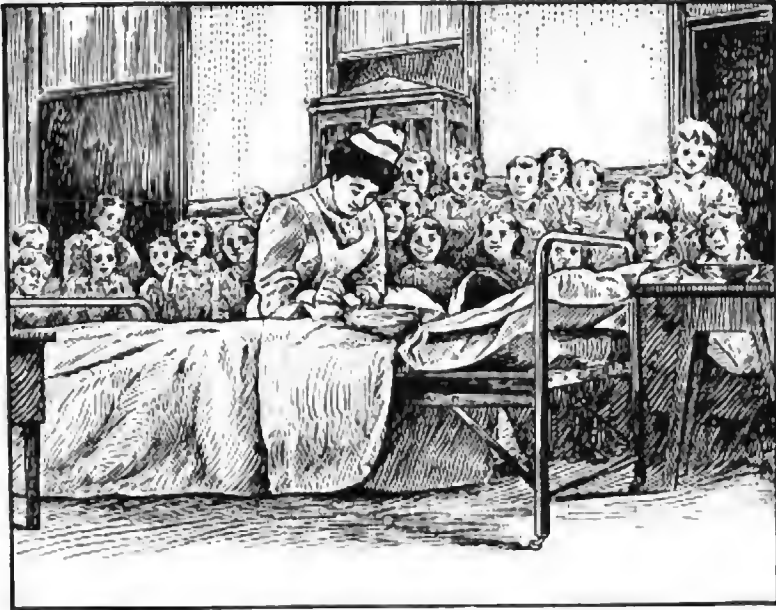
By MARY BOYLE O'REILLY
Secretary of St. Elizabeth's Guild

THE story of district nursing has been told so often and so well that practically nothing remains to be said on the subject. Probably there is not a large hospital in America or in England whose graduate nurses have not at some time voluntarily engaged in out-nursing. Such a corps was first organized in Boston in 1886, and the result of their good work is incalculable.

The Boston City Hospital is located near the centre of one of the city's most crowded quarters. Half a mile to the north is the business district; half a mile to the south, the comfortable homes of the well-to-do. East and west lie acres of factories and tenements, lodging-houses, restaurants, catch-penny enterprises, and cheap theatres. In such wards district nurses were not likely to be idle. Experience proved that the chief work lay in trying to impress on these patients the fact that an ounce of prevention is worth pounds of hospital supplies. The very listeners who were quick to acknowledge this wisdom were equally ready to forget it. When the subject came under discussion at a nurses' weekly conference, it was decided to begin on a new line by reaching and teaching the children. To do this the nursing corps of The Boston City Hospital coöperated with the Guild of Saint Elizabeth. This association of young women, then but recently organized, had undertaken the task of making friends with the children of the district. To this end the guild was carrying on the usual work of a social settlement, together with a new form of manual training which was called a play-school. In this play-school (open every week-day during July and August, to which attendance was, of course, voluntary) two hundred children were taught to make toys and dress dollies, and to study and paint the flowers they afterwards distributed. The guild's only object was to keep the little pupils from the demoralizing influences of the streets.

It was to sixty children of the play-school that the first demonstration lecture was given on July 11, 1899. To make the course at once interesting and practical, the opening lesson was on making a hospital

bed and undressing a patient. The demonstration ended in a gale of laughter, and the experiment was an assured success. For eight Tuesdays sixty small but ambitious nurses—note-book on knee—followed the demonstrator through the mysteries of compresses and fomentations, poultices, pastes, bandages, bathing, food, and temperature. Then came lessons on the scientific care of a baby, until one long-suffering infant was actually bathed and fed by twenty eager volunteers.



From being an experiment, the nursing lectures became the most popular course in the play-school. That the lessons taught were not forgotten was amusingly proven by a child patient in the hospital six months afterwards, who, having watched a nurse bathe a baby, gravely took her to task for having omitted some of the frills "which Miss J. taught in the play-school." And when another summer had brought round a second course of lectures (to which only one hundred and twenty of the anxious applicants could be admitted) it was found necessary to borrow a strange baby for the bathing demonstration, since all the play-school babies had clean scalps!

These are only little things, perhaps, but they point the way to large possibilities. In a few summer mornings scores of little girls gained such practical insight into the tiresome physiology of the school-room that it straightway became interesting, while the facts of physical life, too often dwelt on morbidly by the ignorant, assumed a new dignity.

Only those members of the Guild of Saint Elizabeth who followed the children of the nursing-class into their homes could realize to what intelligent use they put their new knowledge in trying to improve, or at least to counteract, the conditions of their unsanitary surroundings. Windows that seemed nailed down were suddenly opened, waste-pipes were flushed with boiling lye, and the baby's illness was traced to the odorous refuse barrel in the back yard.

Although the close of the play-school put an end to the children's lectures, the coöperation of trained nurses and social settlements could go on indefinitely so long as there are young wives to be instructed in the new duties for which they are so pathetically unprepared, and older mothers to be reluctantly weaned from the fatalistic customs of pre-historic times.

NURSES' SETTLEMENT

BY LILLIAN D. WALD

THE Nurses' Settlement proposes to offer to certain training-schools having, or planning to have, the three-years' course the opportunity to give their pupils training in district work. We feel an obligation to the profession to help those devoted to its interests to develop this important phase of trained nursing. There are many arguments for bringing this into the hospital curriculum. All the responsibility of the sick poor has not been assumed unless a share is taken in the problem of efficient treatment in their homes, and the numerous inquiries that come to the Settlement from educators and graduated nurses show that many of the best thinkers in the profession are interested in the subject. The frequent demand for nurses who have had any experience in it is another reason. Details of the training for pupil nurses are not yet concluded. Roughly outlined, a pupil nurse having had two years' training within the hospital would be eligible for this special training, the hospital agreeing to send the nurse or nurses promised to the Settlement. Each nurse to have no less than two months' training, to reside in her own school, reporting at the Settlement at eight o'clock in the morning, and going back to the school for her dinner (evening) and bed.

The nurses will have the supervision and instruction in their work in the tenements of one of the experienced nurses of the Settlement. Besides professional experience and instruction it is proposed to supplement the work by demonstrations of methods in charity distribution and fresh-air work, with which a nurse must so often combine her labors.