

The Birmingham Hospitals.

THE GENERAL HOSPITAL (continued).

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.

HAVING given my readers a brief historic sketch of our "only General," I will ask them to accompany me on paper to the Hospital of today, and pay a visit to our hostess for the occasion—Miss Busby, the Matron—who has kindly promised to give us a little of her time and much valuable information.

We take a route that leads us to the "dirty lane" of William Hutton—just as bad now, and called now as then, Sumner Lane, "by the aspect directing upwards" (only we must descend it first); which the same authority informs us should ever be "avoided"—never more so than at present, for instead of grassy slopes, we thread our way through streets of a most pronounced urban type.

In days gone by, the Hospital stood open to the lane, and a considerable distance from it, and passers-by could approach and see the building; but something like forty years ago it was hid and protected from the "vulgar gaze" by a substantial brick wall eight feet high, or thereabouts, with a stone coping, and it is now approached by a pair of rather mean-looking wooden gates, hung from stone piers, and surmounted by two immense gas lamps, out of all proportion to the piers, the gates, and the light they emit when they are illuminated. These portals are sacred to "accident calls" and tradesmen's carts; the carriages of the attending Surgeons wait outside in the lane, and those also of visitors, however august.

Near the gates is a large side entrance door, adorned with a knob and a large bell-handle. We meekly pull the latter, and are permitted to enter into a lobby, in which there is a sort of porter's office; this watchful janitor pounces upon a harmless intruder like a spider on a fly. Having mercifully escaped being "meshed," we enter into a large open space in front of the Hospital, that we may call a courtyard, or a front garden, or rather a combination of both, for it extends for some distance from the wall, and is screened off from the Hospital by a hedge of the hardy irrepressible privet, that ever makes a brave attempt to look verdant in spite of the depressing atmosphere of our smoky city. By the way of emulating this cheerful example, the writer beheld about two years ago a goodly show of tiger lilies in full bloom, that the Matron pointed out with natural pride. Making polite inquiries about the same, on my present visit, the Matron was happy to inform me they were still in existence, and in due season might be expected to irradiate the grounds (?).

We will now take a leisurely look at the outside of the Hospital. It is a long, large, heavy-looking, brick building, well begrimed by a century and more of smoke. It consists of a central portion and two wings, which were added in 1790, more than ten years after the Hospital was opened. The central building is larger and loftier than the wings, being three stories high above the basement, and the middle of the façade is ornamented by a pointed cornice. There are three rows of windows, nine in each of the two upper stories, and eight on the ground floor. They are small and narrow, such as were usually found in houses of the period, when light was a taxable commodity and there was a heavy duty upon glass. There are also eight windows in the basement, and in front of the windows a wide space or area. The building

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