

King Street is now converted into Victoria Road Public School, having since been considerably extended, although the front elevation is for the most part intact. Old inhabitants of the district remember the time when the Infirmary stood in an open space in its own grounds before King's Road had a name, before the din of the factory disturbed its peace, or the surrounding tenements of dwelling houses rose on every side. The number of patients admitted during the first year was 45 (it could accommodate 20 at one time), each of whom paid 3s. 6d. a week for board, the finances of the Institution not being in a sufficiently prosperous state to warrant the directors adopting any other course. The Dispensary was, of course, removed hither, from where it was difficult to ascertain. By some, it is supposed to have been situated near the site of St. Andrew's Pro-Cathedral, and by others to have been in Princes Street. Further appeals were made for funds, and for "old linen rags as bandages and dressings for wounds," and it is within the memory of some that careful matrons used to send the more or less dilapidated remains of white linen to the Infirmary for this purpose; but that was before the days of antiseptic surgery. The medical gentlemen of the town who had charge of the Dispensary were appointed to attend at the Infirmary, and subsequently three were chosen to undertake the duties for one year at a small salary. The best physicians and surgeons who have been connected with the town have always been associated with the Infirmary, and we find that the century opened with Sir Alexander Douglas, Bart., and Dr. John Willison as physicians; and Messrs. Robert Stewart, Andrew Willison, William Dick, John Crichton, and Patrick Nimmo as surgeons.

The only resident functionary—besides the housekeeper—was the apothecary, who, in addition to his multifarious duties, including the arranging of midwifery appointments, seems to have had the disbursing of a large part of the funds of the Institution, inasmuch as the two principal items of expenditure presented for the edification of subscribers in the earlier annual reports were—"cash paid per apothecary's book" and "ditto ditto per housekeeper's book." The income was augmented from sundry sources. The amount found in the "Poor's Box" one year was 6½d., although the enterprising housekeeper contributed to the finances in one year no less than 16 guineas as "rent of wards received from the Militia" during eight months, while "Nurses' spinning" is another frequent item in the Treasurer's account, doubtless due to the energy of the said enterprising housekeeper, and to the fact that the higher capabilities

of the Nurses would not be much in requisition during the tenancy of the wards by the Militia. The institution continued to increase in usefulness and in the goodwill of the citizens of Dundee and the country districts, with the result that it became enriched by numerous legacies and donations. The benevolent and well-to-do gave liberally of their means, and it is worthy of note that the ancestors of those who to-day through their liberality have made the Infirmary what it is, were among its early benefactors.

In 1811 the Siddons gave a theatrical performance in aid of the Infirmary, and long before "Hospital Sunday" was instituted the "annual sermon" was a source of revenue one year to the amount of £60 5s. 1½d., although from this was to be deducted £3 16s. as "expenses of procession." There would not seem to have been any arrangement with the preacher of the annual sermon in the matter of a percentage on the "takings," but we find the entry of 2s. 5½d. as "minister's stipend." It was in 1819 that the Governors made application to the King in Council for a Royal Charter which was duly granted. By this time provision had been made for fever patients, and the usefulness of the Institution was gradually extending. And thus early in the century the Dundee Medical School had its genesis, it being ordained that the surgeon's apprentices and students of medicine who had formerly had free admission to the House should now purchase a ticket to admit them to the wards and to the different surgical operations. Many a valuable clinical lecture was given by the bedside, and many a practical demonstration of surgery as it was then—before the days of chloroform—given in the old Infirmary. Dr. Crichton was one of the most eminent lithotomists of his time, and performed this difficult operation over 200 times with a very small percentage of deaths.

About this time the urgent necessity of some provision being made for patients labouring under mental derangement became evident to the management of the Infirmary, the ultimate result being the erection of the lunatic asylum on a piece of ground bought from the late Mr. James Guthrie of Craigie, and then described as being half a mile north of the town, although now quite merged into it. The foundation stone was laid on 3rd September, 1812, by the Right Hon. Lord Duncan, Grand-Master-elect for Scotland, and after many delays what is now the old Asylum at Albert Street was open for the reception of patients in 1820. Meanwhile the Royal Infirmary grew still more popular. The population had increased to about 32,000; and in

The "NURSING RECORD" has a Larger Sale than any other Journal devoted solely to Nursing Work.

The "NURSING RECORD" has a Larger Sale than any other Journal devoted solely to Nursing Work

previous page

next page