

many Hospitals as an economical and efficient substitute for an instrument steriliser. At this point Miss Cartwright gives a useful hint, "instruments that are washed and *steamed*, instead of being boiled, are so much easier to clean. Boiling is apt to stain the instruments."

All the linen used for abdominal sections is kept under the Matron's own lock and key, and the precaution is taken, after the linen used in this branch of Surgery is returned from the laundry, it is thoroughly baked before use, so that the Surgeons feel confident that it is in a condition of sterilisation.

Just a glance into the Out-Patient Department, which is crowded, and where a woman is heard to say, "one feels so confidential-like in talking about our ailments to ladies." And then one look into the Dispensary, which is under the guidance of a woman Dispensèr, with one Assistant and one Pupil, and a very pleasant visit to a well-conducted Hospital is at an end.

A. K.

The Johannesburg Hospital Question.

JUST at this time, when the public attention that recently was devoted to the gold mines of South Africa is now centred on the question of "peace or war," anything affecting Johannesburg especially is of great interest. In the Hospital there a good deal of friction has arisen as to whether the Catholic nuns perform the Nursing on the lines of up-to-date care of the sick. The *South African Catholic Magazine* says:—

"The storm arose in this way. Out of eighty-four doctors who have attended patients in the Hospital since the beginning, two have found out lately that the nursing staff is not "up to date." One of the discoverers has been only fourteen months in Johannesburg, and states that he has been the whole time endeavouring to collate facts to prove his case: which anyhow shows that he has made up his mind *à priori* to find fault with the Nuns. The other is a medical man of much repute in Johannesburg, and one of the consultants of the Hospital. The two doctors are partners. They asked that the Nuns be peremptorily dismissed and replaced by lay Nurses.

The Hospital Board, which meets every fortnight and investigates every complaint, from whatever source it may come, went to a good deal of trouble to examine the charges made by the younger man, *i.e.*, that the nursing staff was 'incompetent, ignorant of its duties; and untrained.' Two special meetings were held to examine thoroughly all the particulars; all the consultants and the Matron were present. The result was that the charges proved to be unfounded, but the Board decided that more female Nurses were needed—a need that has been long felt by all concerned, as the rapid increase of the Johannesburg population has also caused a large and continuous increase in the number of patients.

Among the members of the Board appear the names of well-known gentlemen, forming a body

thoroughly fit for the duties it has undertaken. Mr. Rogers (father of one of the complaining doctors) and Mr. Van der Merwe sided with the complaining parties; all the rest of the Board and the consultants were against them. Still new regulations were framed; the resident surgeon was sent to Europe to find forty Nurses, Sisters if he could, otherwise lay Nurses without any reference to religion, but all had to be qualified, and their qualifications approved of by a leading London practitioner, nominated by the consultants. The two complainants then addressed themselves to the Johannesburg Medical Society to help them to expel the Sisterhood, but the Society upheld the Sisters, and besides found that as the Board had always acted according to the advice of the consultants, prominent men in the medical profession, the Society could not interfere without offering the deepest insult to the Board and to their own *confrères*.

Six Sisters, with all due certificates, have arrived in Johannesburg from Europe.

Mr. Rogers and Mr. Van der Merwe have resigned, Mr. Van der Merwe finding an occasion to drag the question of religion into the controversy.

Through all the maze of letters, interviews, and editorial articles, we have noticed a few things we mean to remember:

(1) All those who speak about the Sisters acknowledge that they are devoted, attentive, and do all in their power for the comfort of the sick. We knew it, and are glad to see it acknowledged publicly, even by the complainants.

(2) The two doctors who wished to see the Sisters sent away seem to believe that a Sisterhood is unable to produce Nurses 'up to date' in this nineteenth century. They are mistaken. Religious Orders have trained Nurses and tended the sick too long not to have acquired efficient traditions of their own, and they are too docile not to learn the new medical teaching of each generation. If it is needed that every Nurse have a piece of parchment wherein it be recorded that she has had one year's technical training—so many years' practical training—that so many doctors have found her capable and dutiful—the Nuns can have these parchments, for they all have to go through the ordeal of which the history is recorded in these certificates. Only Orders of long standing, and with a reputation made, might find it hard to have their members all on a sudden put to an additional outside test, as if they were solitary persons who have no connection with a Nursing body. Not even medical men would like to have to 'go up' again, because for one reason or another their present qualification might be distrusted. Members of religious Orders do not refuse to be taught, nor to submit to Government regulations; but they do object to be treated as unknown quantities."

It is perfectly certain, as has been maintained several times in the NURSING RECORD, that religious Sisters or Nuns will have to submit to the same terms of training as have been thought necessary for lay Nurses. No amount of religious knowledge can compensate for technical and professional ignorance. The odour of sanctity can never replace definite treatment and Nursing.

It is very little comfort to a sick person that his Nurse wears religious robes, if, at the same time, she is unable to dress his wounds and lift him with skilled hand. The experiences learnt from Irish Infirmaryes

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