

assisted by the Rev. W. Hind, Charles Sempill de Segundo, M.B. London, to Gertrude Lucy, third daughter of the late Thomas W. Bastow, of Plymouth (late Sister John, St. Bartholomew's Hospital.)

WE are glad to see that so many newspapers are following up the crusade we began a year and a half ago against the growing custom of women masquerading in Nurses' dress when they have had little or no Hospital training. The *Bristol Times* has a long article headed "A Pernicious Fashion," in which the writer deals forcibly with the subject. It designates the wearing of a Hospital dress by any other than a trained Nurse as a "fraudulent" proceeding, and further on says :

"The vile custom is especially noticeable, of course, in London. But even here in Bristol, and in other provincial cities and towns, one cannot often walk many yards in a crowded street without encountering some woman wearing a portion or all of the Nurse's garb. We all know it, and we have been accustomed to associate it with errands of charity and mercy. It is a picturesque and striking costume ; and it has been stolen, we suppose, by women who wish to make themselves attractive at very small expense. There is not much of the pride that apes humility about it : for there is every reason to suspect that all, or nearly all, of these sham Nurses belong to the classes of shop girls, or domestic servants. These are very respectable classes no doubt, and there is no intention to say a word against them ; but the chances are a hundred to one that a person encountered wearing a Nurse's uniform in the street, if she be not what she pretends to be, is either a barmaid or a shop assistant or a housemaid or some such member of general society."

THE Manchester Coroner has strongly condemned the system of prescribing medicine at the Monsall Fever Hospital ; and, indeed, when we learn the following facts from the *Birmingham Post*, we must also condemn most severely a system which permits a Nurse, with only twelve months' training, and without any experience of dispensing, to mix poisons. Last week, a boy named Johnson, eleven years of age, was admitted as a patient suffering from scarlet fever. The following day, a medicine, consisting of three drachms of quinine mixture and four drops of strychnine, to be administered every four hours, was prescribed in writing. In the ward where the patient lay was kept a stock of strychnine mixture containing four drops of the poison to one *drachm* of water. How this mixture was protected from too curious patients is not stated, but apparently there was a "stock" of the poisonous mixture ready to hand.

The Nurse in charge of the ward passed the prescription for Johnson on to another Nurse, who, in reply to the Coroner, said she had had about twelve months' experience of Hospital

work, and had no knowledge as to the mixing of medicines. This Nurse by some means made a mistake, and "instead of giving the lad only one drachm of the strychnine solution, gave him eight times as much," apparently under the impression that the "stock" of strychnine mixture contained four drops of poison to the *ounce* of water instead of to the *drachm*. Her own explanation was that "she thought she mistook the medical sign on the bottle containing the solution," and the Coroner adopted that explanation. Although medical men, he said, were used to the signs for scruples, drachms, ounces, and the like, and looked upon them as simple to interpret, he could not agree that the particular sign in question was such that a Nurse could easily read, and he expressed the conviction that if the indication on the "stock" bottle had been written in plain English, instead of in signs, there would not have been the same possibility of mistake. The mistake, in his opinion, had been invited by the system, and he hoped some better method would be adopted.

Whatever may have been the demerits of the system at this particular Institution, it will hardly be questioned that, in dealing with dangerous poisons like strychnine, the utmost precautions should be taken. That a Hospital Nurse should have been able to make the mistake of administering thirty-two drops of a deadly poison when only four drops had been prescribed is certainly surprising. For one thing, there should have been some care taken that the Nurse charged with the duty of administering the medicine could read the usual signs used by medical men, if stocks of poison so labelled are left about the Hospital to be drawn from as occasion requires. It will occur to many that this stock of the poisonous mixture should have been kept under lock and key, and only accessible to persons of proved ability to read medical prescriptions aright. The misuse of poisons—either overdoses, or doses in mistake for some other similar-looking compound—is remarkably common ; and that such a mistake should have occurred in a public Institution only emphasises the need for exceptional caution in the use of these dangerous drugs.

WE have to acknowledge with much gratitude £1 to be spent on Christmas Cheer at Sir Julian Goldsmid's Home of Rest for Nurses, from Miss M. Wheeler, Sandown, Isle of Wight ; also a donation to the funds of 15s. from Miss Ridley, Assistant Matron of the Royal Berkshire Hospital, Reading. The Home is always quite full for the Christmas Holiday, and last year no end of good things found their way in little hampers to 12, Sussex Square, from numerous friends. Such gifts will be equally welcome *this* year.

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