

### Annotations.

#### NECESSITY, NOT CHARACTER.

From time to time, cases are made public from which it is apparent that nuns, placed in charge of the sick, object to attend on patients suffering from certain diseases.

From Dr. Anna Hamilton's interesting thesis on hospital nurses in France, we learn that even the Sisters of the Order of St. Vincent de Paul—probably the broadest-minded of all the Orders—refuse to undertake the care of girls of bad life, of women suffering from diseases produced by their own fault, and of lying-in women, and a clause to this effect is always inserted in their agreements with the administrative bodies of hospitals. Neither are these Sisters permitted to dress children of the male sex.

Again, at the last weekly meeting of the Granard (co. Longford) Board of Guardians, the Irish Local Government Board announced that they had instructed their medical inspector, Dr. J. Smyth, to hold an inquiry on oath into the nursing and other arrangements for the care of the sick and infirm in the workhouse, and also to report on the want of harmony which appears to exist between the medical officer and the nursing staff. The report of the doctor to the Guardians states that "owing to the continued illness of Mother Michael, and her consequent absence from duty, serious irregularities were resulting to the patients under her charge."

Two critical cases were, it is alleged, left without the food ordered for them; surely there is something wrong here. The whole routine of the management of the nursing department cannot come to a standstill because of the illness of the head nun. Another should be deputed to act for her.

The doctor also reported that, Mother Michael still being absent from duty, he had engaged a temporary nurse to take charge of an acute specific case, this case being outside the sphere of the nuns' work.

The position assumed by nuns in relation to the care of certain cases appears to us extraordinary. If they discriminate between the cases they will and will not nurse, one of two things happens: either the patients are deprived of skilled attention, or a lay nurse must be specially engaged to attend them.

The point of view of the nuns is, apparently, that the modesty and delicacy on which they pride themselves are imperilled by attendance

on certain cases. Assuming this to be so (which we do not for a moment admit), who is the more suitable to attend to a class of patients usually designated "screen cases"—the young lay nurse, or the religious Sister who is generally of a certain age, and who is professedly inspired by exalted religious sentiment, which should be her safeguard against any possible injury to her moral well-being? We confess the position of those nuns who refuse personal attendance to cases which they hand over quite cheerfully to the care of lay nurses is quite incomprehensible as well as unjustifiable. A little less "prudery" and a little more real care for the sick would remove their difficulties. It is well to remember that the Divine Master, whose professed servants they are, healed *all* the sick brought to Him, necessity, not personal worthiness, being their passport to His healing power. And, ever since, all nurses worthy of the name have realised that their profession imposes the same obligation upon them, and the one test they require of the sick, whose servants they are, is that of necessity, not character. Religious communities will do well to revise the position they have assumed on this question. Assuredly, if they do not the nursing of the sick and infirm will pass out of their hands.

In making these remarks we must add that, in the nursing of patients in private houses, it is only suitable, when our profession is better organised, for certain cases to be delegated to the care of efficient male nurses; but these nurses must first be trained, and, meanwhile, no woman with real nursing instinct will cause unnecessary suffering by refusing skilled care to any patient who needs it.

#### NURSING ORGANISATION.

In our correspondence columns we publish an important letter from a medical man on the subject of the better training and organisation of nurses, from which it will be seen that the subject is now receiving consideration from thoughtful members of the medical profession—a most hopeful sign of the times. We hope our readers will carefully consider this letter and give us their opinion on the many points of professional interest brought forward, so that the whole question may be thoroughly discussed. The more these points of organisation are considered the better, so that when we go to Parliament with a draft Bill it may be a well-matured and comprehensive document, and as such commend itself to trained nurses, the medical profession, the public, and last, but not least, to the Legislature.

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