

mercy swept into its current thousands of men and women who . . . lived thereafter only to show forth again in their lives the love which had changed the face of the earth for them. In this movement the large share taken by women was as conspicuous as it was significant. Yet it is a mistake to assume, as many evangelical writers do, that the status of women was strikingly, or for all time, elevated by Christianity. . . . The position of women, socially and legally, was not always low under the old religions, nor has it been by any means always high under the new."

Coming now to the earliest orders of women workers in the Church, we find "those specially concerned in nursing were the Deaconesses and the Widows. Later appeared the Virgin, the Presbyteress, the Canoness, and the Nun. Of these the first two and last only played a part in nursing." It is impossible here to allude more than briefly to the office of deaconess. Suffice it to say that "from the earliest apostolic times deaconesses were placed on a level with deacons, and the title of 'diakonus' was applied equally to men and women. . . . The deaconess was the first parish worker, friendly visitor, and district nurse, and from her day the work of visiting nursing has never been unknown. . . . The spheres of activity both of deaconess and widow were gradually limited and curtailed by the ever-vigilant reluctance of men to admit women to positions of authority."

#### EARLY HOSPITALS AND THE ROMAN MATRONS.

One of the most famous hospitals in early Christian times was that founded by Basil, Bishop of Caesarea, about 369 A.D. The staff was divided into nurses, doctors, carriers, and artificers. Another was that founded by St. John Chrysostom at Constantinople. In Rome, in the middle of the fourth century, we come upon that "noble group of Roman matrons whose distinguished positions as descendants of the oldest and most patriotic Roman families, and whose learning and personal gifts of character, with the great deeds that they wrought in establishing Christianity, founding hospitals and convents, and forwarding education, have placed them high in the list of great women." They devoted themselves to the care of the sick, whom they nursed with the utmost self-abnegation, and they lived to see monasticism, which Marcella, one of the most distinguished of them, first established in Rome, "become the general form of organisation under which men and women might find self-expression outside of family ties."

#### THE RISE OF MONASTICISM.

"There have been four 'Rules' recognised by the Church for the Government of monastic orders—those of Basil, of Augustine, of Benedict, and of Francis. These 'Rules,' which, for illustrative purposes, one might compare to unchangeable constitutions, controlled the general features, and ordered the main development of the monastic nursing orders." It is easy to see how the observation of an unchangeable Rule by those devoted to a work which is essentially one of change and progress must have a cramping effect upon it, but that the monasteries had their uses at the time when they were founded is evident.

"From the beginning of the fifth century, when

many important monasteries were founded, the long and glorious record of the religious nursing orders of men and women may be said to follow a superb curve through a thousand years and more from its rise in the humble services of the at first despised early Christians upwards, through the Middle Ages, with their vast wealthy and beautiful monasteries and hospitals and the supremacy of monastic orders in every kind of institutional activity and administration, and down again to the present day, when modern times having brought a new science, new economics, and new forms of social adjustment, they no longer lead, and, in nursing, are chiefly interesting from the historical standpoint, though still everywhere models of organisation and discipline.

In the seventh and following centuries abbesses held commanding positions. In England four abbesses were summoned to Parliament as peers, and Saxon abbesses had the duties and privileges of barons, and as such were summoned to the Imperial Diet. Famous abbesses ruled over related houses of monks and nuns, one such house being ruled by a line of 32 abbesses. "Everywhere feminine supremacy, and no religious community was more prosperous and eminent." It is also interesting to learn that the nurses of the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, in Siena, were canons of the Cathedral.

#### THE MILITARY NURSING ORDERS.

It is only possible to allude in the briefest way to the Orders of Military Hospitalers, which took so large a share in nursing in the middle ages, more especially in connection with the Crusades. Chief of these were the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, the Teutonic Knights, and the Knights of St. Lazarus, whose emblem the German Nurses' Association has now adopted. The Red Cross Knights, or Templars, were not a nursing order.

#### A GROUP OF SAINTS.

The next chapter deals with a group of saints; St. Francis of Assisi, "foremost and most effective of the nursing missionaries to the lepers of the Middle Ages"; Clara, "the highborn maiden who at seventeen slipped from her father's house to exchange her festal dress for the brown robe of a nun, and who rounded the 'Poor Clares,' in part a nursing order." Elizabeth of Hungary, whose devotion as a nurse was limitless; and St. Catherine of Siena, who lived only thirty-four years, but during that time was hospital nurse, prophetess, preacher, and reformer of society and of the Church.

#### THE RISE OF THE SECULAR ORDERS.

The description of the rise of the secular orders is of great interest. "We see these pious nursing orders originally develop entirely independently of the Church. . . . But none of these associations escapes in its final development, the influence of the Church, under which (as is most frequently the case) they either willingly place themselves, or by which, if they show signs of resistance, they are of purpose controlled. That such attempts at resistance were not lacking is shown by repeated injunctions of the Church asserting its right to organise all, even lay associations, and by the con-

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