

POOR LAW NURSING.

Some time ago the Guardians of the Birmingham Union revised the hours of duty and leave of absence of their Nursing Staff on lines which were very favourably commented on in the nursing world. We are officially informed that they have now carried the matter a step further and have revised the scale of salaries of Charge Nurses and Probationer Nurses and have also standardised throughout their three Infirmaries the periods of probationers' training. The Charge Nurses' Salaries will now be £38 increasing by annual increments of £2 to a maximum of £42 per annum. The period of training for probationers will be one of three years and three months, including the three months' trial period which will be paid for, and the salary will be £12 for the first year, £15 for the second year and £18 for the last 15 months. A selection will be made from the best probationers as vacancies occur in the Maternity Schools for probationers to obtain midwifery training and qualify for the C.M.B. Probationers so chosen will remain an extra nine months, making four years in all, and they will receive £18 for the third year only and £26 for the fourth year with the rank of Staff Nurse. The salary for the fourth year is increased more than usual to allow the nurse to pay expenses she will incur in taking some of her maternity training outside the Institution under an arrangement the Guardians have made with two qualified teachers.

MEDALS FOR EFFICIENCY IN NURSING.

The Liverpool Select Vestry have decided to award a gold and a silver medal to the nurses who obtain the highest number of marks in the examination at the end of the three years' term of training of their probationers. The first of these medals, which are inscribed "For efficiency in nursing, Brownlow Hill Hospital, Liverpool," have been awarded to Miss Ethel M. Deas and Miss Annie Jennings, who are to be congratulated on this well-deserved honour.

THE PASSING BELL.

By the death of Mrs. Harriet Coster, Lady Superintendent at St. George's Hospital, Hyde Park Corner, London, S.W., from 1872 to 1897, one of the early workers for the improvement of nursing methods has passed away. As early as 1858 Mrs. Coster was Superintendent Nurse at the St. Pancras Infirmary, where she endeavoured, under the direction of the Medical Officer, first to learn all he could teach her and then to teach her subordinates. Mrs. Coster, who in recent years was Nurse Hon. Secretary of the Royal British Nurses Association died on February 1st., at the age of 82. The first part of the funeral service took place at Kew Parish Church, on Friday in last week, and the interment at Richmond Cemetery.

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"THE CARNIVAL OF FLORENCE."*

Miss Marjorie Bowen is at home in such surroundings as a carnival provides. She is nothing if not artistic; and the luxury of describing gorgeous scenes of nature and art amounts to almost a passion with her. Her latest work riots in colour. With this vivid background always on her canvas, she sketches in with daring pencil the powerful personality of Savonarola—the one-time prophet of Florence, who denounced with scathing bitterness the frivolity and sins of that gay city. The influence of this monk pervades the book from cover to cover. His sombre teaching is set off against the wanton profligacy of the Medici; and the struggle for ascendancy in Florence between the man who claimed supernatural inspiration, and Pietro—the son of Lorenzo—who reigned over Florence, as head of the Medici—form the subject of the story. Love and passion are depicted chiefly in the person of Aprilis, the lovely daughter of the money-lender, whose betrothal to Astorre della Gherardesca is announced on the eve of the carnival. We are told of her that in all her short life of seventeen years, she had one topic instilled into her, beauty and the power of beauty over the weakness of men. She had accepted her patrician lover as a matter of course; he was her father's choice. Already she was vaguely discontented. What was a woman's life without love? From the loggia of her father's house, she observed a figure disguised by a wolf mask watching her. Later, unseen by her friends, she was standing free in the street, "for a moment with a sense of almost delirious pleasure." Another moment and the man in the wolf mask had seized her in his arms. The struggles of Aprilis were like those of a bird in a trap. The man proved to be the head of the Medici—Pietro—who adopted this plan of humiliating his enemy, her betrothed, Astorre. She tells him, "I will not be the toy of any man, Messare, and her eyes defied him. And if you do me any harm, there are three people who will be revenged on you."

"I will not do you harm, sweet; you are safe with me." And then he stooped and kissed her.

From that moment her foolish heart was captive. The gorgeous and luxurious home of the Medici to which she was taken satisfied the natural cravings of her mind; and though she escapes unharmed—and, indeed, Pietro seemed to have no such intention, at that time being enslaved by Arcangela—she looked longingly back on the forbidden delights, a troubled medley always in her mind between desire and goodness. As may be supposed, Astorre believes the worst of her and the betrothal is at an end. She is married hastily to Crestofano, who, partly out of compassion and partly owing to a pecuniary arrangement with the money lender, consents to the union. Aprilis in her lonely unloved life,

* By Marjorie Bowen. Methuen & Co., Ltd.

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