

sandaled feet, sped on their rounds of charity and ministered each, Physician and Nurse in one, to the needs of the sick and poor, they took into their Priory Hospital."

After the downfall of the monastic Institutions in England, the charge of the Hospitals in London was given by Henry VIII. to the municipal body, and St. Bartholomew's amongst them, and it was endowed with sufficient of its former possessions to maintain a hundred poor men and women, who were waited upon by a Matron and twelve women under her, to make the beds and to wash and attend upon the inmates. Their salaries were not excessive, the Matron receiving only £2 6s. 8d., and each of the women forty shillings yearly, although the Clerk, in his usual account of the expenditure of the Hospital, speaks feelingly of the "excessive price of all things." In those far off days society journals were not in vogue; nevertheless, scandal was not altogether a thing unknown. Writing in refutation of some accusation made against the Hospital, the governing body says:—"The wickedness of report at this day, good reader, is grown to such rankness, that nothing almost is able to defend itself against the venom thereof; but that either with open slander or privy whispering, it shall be so undermined that it shall neither have the good success which otherwise it might; nay, the thanks which for the worthiness it ought."

In 1557, the charges were drawn up for the Nursing Staff, and they were so comprehensive that some of them are in use to this day. The rules for officers and attendants most carefully provide against any idleness on the part of the Sisters. "The Matron shall see that they have flax for spinning and other manner of work, to avoid idleness and be profitable to the poor patients." Likewise, the Sisters are admonished to "as much as in them lies avoid and shun the company and conversation of all men." We hear complaints against the severity of Hospital discipline even in these days, but in the past it was far more rigid. The beadles, or porters, who had to maintain order in the Wards, are bidden: "And whatsoever poor person shall be found a swearer, or an irreverent user of his mouth towards God, or a contemner of the Matron or other officers of the house, or shall refuse to go to bed at the lawful hours appointed him, shall be punished, after one warning given, in the stocks," and "they are further to declare his folly to the Almoners, that they may mete out further punishment to the offender." Further, "No patient who was declared healed by the Physicians of the Hospital was permitted to question their sentence," for if the Beadles found any patient who had been healed in the Hospital "begging alms, or counter-

feiting any disease, they shall immediately commit him to a cage, and give knowledge to the Governors of the house." Woe to the unhappy man who had been pronounced a "perfect cure," and who had the audacity to have a relapse after he had left the Hospital!

It would take too long to enumerate the roll call of illustrious names, celebrated in medicine and surgery, who have been connected with St. Bartholomew's. That there were many devoted Sisters, working under these great men, who were individually good Nurses according to their lights, none will deny. Self-taught, self-educated, having to do with rougher times and rougher treatment than ours, they were, nevertheless, often unwearied in their attention to the sick, hard-working and homely women, who had a large fund of sympathy and tenderness for their patients, but whose individual efforts, not being based on scientific principles, were consequently unequal and uncertain. Yet it is a fact that one must own with regret that Nurses, as a class, in past days deservedly gained for themselves a most unsavoury reputation.

The "Sairy Gamp" and "Betsy Prigg," of Dickens, clothed in "bombazine" and redolent of gin, were by no means creatures of his own imagination, but distinct types, graphically portrayed, of women who were actually in existence, and who had stamped the profession of Nursing with utter contempt and ridicule, instilling into the minds of the public an instinctive antipathy to Hospitals, Infirmaries, and Workhouses, and which will take the combined forces of knowledge, sympathy, and refinement, years to eradicate.

But in our generation there awoke again in England the old feeling that had slept for centuries, that it was a woman's *privilege* to nurse the sick, that the noblest and purest gentlewoman could devote herself without hesitation to a profession that was not derogatory to her womanhood, but only called forth its highest and brightest qualities, and ranged her as the competent assistant of men of science, in their ceaseless combat with ignorance, disease, and death.

It was one woman, who, when that feeling awoke, gave it practical tangible laws—Florence Nightingale came forward, and in her broad-minded and unanswerable works on Nursing and Hygiene, laid down the laws and principles of Nursing too clearly to be refuted, and founding a school for the training of Nurses, which has become the model for others, led the way from the maze of good intentions to the clear path of practical usefulness, constituting Nursing a profession exceptionally adapted for woman. In it she finds scope for her energies, mental and physical, and her capacity for loving (and by love, I mean that intense power—

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)