



Our London Letter.

AN EARLY CHAPTER IN HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATION.

A LONDON Hospital, largely supported by public charity, a public dissatisfied with the work of the Hospital, a Board of Governors defending their policy by aid of the press, and courting a strict inquiry, by impartial judges, into the Hospital administration. Does not this read very much like a chapter from the history of the nineteenth century? Though, as regards the last clause, the Governors of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, in the year of grace, 1552, showed that they were a long way ahead of certain charitable institutions, whose policy was subjected to a similar severe criticism some 340 years later.

I lately came across a small volume, printed in black letter and bearing date 1552, which sets forth "The Ordre of the Hospital of S. Bartholemewes in Westsmythfelde in London." It is, as hinted above, an official defence of the Governors' policy, which had been severely attacked by "certain busy-bodies," whether in good faith or not, it is impossible to say. The book opens with a preface, which tells the story of the foundation by Henry VIII., who gave an annual sum of £333 6s. 8d. for the endowment, on condition that the citizens of London would furnish a like sum. The pious King's share was, it seems, hardly what it pretended to be, for it consisted of the rents of certain ramshackle tenements, which cost the City a large sum to put in order. However, the scheme was carried out, and provision made "for the continuall reliefe and help of an hundred sore and diseased." During the five years previous to 1552, patients were healed of various diseases "to the number of eight hundred, and thence safe delivered, that other having need might enter into their room. Besides, eight score and twelve, that have forsaken this life in their intolerable miseries and griefes." The preface goes on to state the object of the book, namely, by openly declaring the true state of affairs, to give the lie to slanderers and back-biters, and "if there be not set forth so much as is expedient . . . or that any man spieth aught in this order worthy to be reformed, he shall not need to cry it at the Cross [*Paul's Cross*] but shall find those at the Hospitall, that both

gladly will and may reform it." As much as to say, "Don't summon a public meeting and make a number of hasty and damaging assertions, but come and examine into the affairs of the Hospital; we are perfectly willing to carry out any reasonable reforms." The preface concluded, we come to the "ordre" which first enumerates the Governors, whose posts were honorary, but by no means sinecures. The Lord Mayor was patron, and ultimate authority in all matters. Under him was a board of twelve Governors, a President, four Surveyors, four Almoners, a Treasurer, two Scrutiners. Their duties are enumerated at length, but as their titles explain fairly well what these duties were, we need add very little, except as regards those of the Almoners, which were very comprehensive. It was their duty, every week, to inquire personally, and of the officers themselves, whether each officer was doing his or her duty; to inquire if there were any persons to be called to account for disorder; if the chirurgiens of the house were doing their duty to the poor, impartially, and without corruption; to receive a detailed report of the week's report; to provide wood and coal; to regulate the accommodation for patients. "Ye shall also see unto the keeping sweet of the poor, and in your proper persons visit them once every week at the least, and to see that their service of bread, meat and drink, be truly and faithfully delivered unto them."

We next come to "the officers that for wages are hired for to have the necessary doings in the service of the house and the poor." They were as follows:—The Hospiteler, Renter Clerck, Butler, Porter, Matrone, Twelve Sisters, Eight Byddles. There were also "as in a kynde by themselves iii Chirurgiens in the wages of the Hospitall, gevyng daily attendance upon the cures of the poor."

The Hospiteler had to preach and conduct religious services, and though it does not say so, we must imply from this that he was a duly ordained clergyman. He had furthermore to receive victuals and provisions from the steward for the use of the poor; to deliver so much as was needful for immediate requirements to the cook; to see that the food was dressed seasonably and truly delivered and distributed; to receive applicants for admission and to give them their passport on their discharge.

It was the duty of the Renter Clerk to collect the rents from the various tenants of the Hospital, to keep the account books, and a journal which recorded all that passed at the weekly meetings of the Governors. The duties of the Butler (or Steward) and Porter do not call for any description. The Beadles, amongst other things, were required to perambulate the streets with a view to discover any persons in need of the good offices of the Hospital, and to report the same to the Almoners. It was also their duty to take measures against discharged patients who went out counterfeiting disease as an excuse for begging in the precincts and liberties of the City. The chief points in the charge to the Chirurgiens are that they should do their duty to all patients, rich and poor alike, and should receive no bribes.

The chief interest of this old book to most readers of the NURSING RECORD would be, I suppose, the

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