

quence of this inquiry, have arisen because of the mistaken idea that Sisters of Mercy are "born Nurses." It has been shown that some, at any rate, of the patients have been greatly neglected, and, inasmuch as it would be impossible to believe that these excellent Sisters of Mercy were actuated by any but the highest motives in their work, it necessarily follows that such neglect must be due solely to extreme ignorance.

It has been proved that the nuns have charge of the Nursing during the day, but that they retire to bed, leaving from fifty to seventy patients through the long night hours to the tender mercies of one untrained pauper. A test case was carefully inquired into—that of a girl who had been suffering from rheumatic fever, and who was found by a visitor to be in a state of filth and neglect almost indescribable, and almost incredible. Her bed had become a perfect cesspool, the girl's body was crusted with filth, and when a good Samaritan in the shape of the rector's wife insisted upon the patient being washed, and placed in a clean bed, the Sister of Mercy would not even remain in the room during the necessary ablutions. The girl was removed to a Dublin Hospital, and then it was found that one hip joint had become spontaneously dislocated, that replacement was impossible, and that the girl was a cripple for life. If possible, the affairs in the maternity ward were shown to be even worse, because the nuns refused to enter that ward altogether, and the Nursing of the patients was left entirely to very young girls whose characters unfortunately were not of the best. The terrible evils caused by sheer ignorance on the part of the attendants in this Infirmary show what needless and unnecessary suffering may be, and is, caused by persons who are ignorant of Nursing details, however well-intentioned they may be. We can only hope that the scandals revealed at Athlone may be the means of introducing a happier state of affairs into the Workhouse Infirmarys of Ireland. It must be remembered that similar revelations in Paris caused the outburst of feeling in that city which resulted in the removal of unskilled workers from its chief Hospitals; and there can be no doubt that untrained women, however estimable in character, and however devoted, and gratuitously given, their services may be, cannot yield to the sick the assistance which can only be rendered by trained Nurses, and which it is essential that the sick should receive if they are to obtain the full benefit of modern medical treatment. We would be the last to say a word against Roman Catholic Sisters—who have in many countries shown invaluable examples of heroism and self-sacrifice—but we maintain that they are out of place in a modern Hospital or Infirmary unless

they have been thoroughly trained in the duties of a Nurse; and even then we are inclined to think that their natural tendency towards proselytism may have detrimental effects upon the nervous systems of their patients. There can however be no question that if Sisters of Mercy undertake the work of Nursing, they are bound in common honour to do the work; and we fear it is impossible to doubt that by neglecting the patients, and especially by leaving them alone all night in the care of an untrained pauper, the Sisters of Mercy at the Athlone Workhouse Infirmary have probably done irreparable harm in many instances which have passed without comment and even without notice. And in view of the public scandal which these revelations have caused, we earnestly hope for the sake of everyone concerned that this system of untrained Nursing will be speedily abolished throughout Ireland.

STARCHED DRESSES.

SEVERAL patients have called our attention to a very important practical matter in reference to the dress, especially, of private Nurses. It is a well-known fact that nothing is so disturbing to a sick person as the rustling, crackling sounds of a stiff dress, and this, which is bad enough during the day, is worse during the quiet hours of the night. That such a dress was worn by the night Nurse has proved sufficient in the case of some nervous patients to banish sleep, and to do them therefore immense harm. Considering that it is a rule of fundamental importance in Nursing that all unnecessary noise should be avoided in the sick room, it seems extraordinary that some Nurses should wear such noise-producing garments. But, as one patient recently expressed it, her "Nurse's starched dresses after a few hours got on her nerves," and until a quieter attire was adopted by the Nurse, that patient's condition distinctly deteriorated. We are well aware of the difficulty of the case so far as Nurses are concerned, because the use of a washable dress is indispensable in modern Nursing, and if the material used be a thin cotton such as that known as "Zephyr," and which is so commonly employed now both in Hospital and private Nursing, it is almost a necessity that a considerable amount of starch should be added in the washing in order to keep the dress clean and neat. But the thicker cottons and linens, such for example as the "Galateas," require much less starch to be used for this purpose, and they may therefore be employed for dresses with greater advantage to the patient inasmuch as the rustling of which such well-deserved complaint is made, is thereby saved. Formerly, creaking shoes were supposed to be part and parcel of the trained Nurse, together with a voice which was continually lowered to a ghostly whisper; the one accompaniment being as irritating to the invalid as the other. The modern trained Nurse has been taught to avoid the latter obnoxious quality, and the leading shoe-makers have combined in a friendly rivalry to produce silent and comfortable shoes. So, the antiseptic system having made washing dresses indispensable, science must find as speedily as possible some substitute for starch so as to lessen the rustling of the stiff dress in the sick room.

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