

Annotations.

HOSPITAL FESTIVITIES.

ONCE again, as the Christmas season comes round, the question as to what festivities shall be arranged in our hospitals is under consideration. Some institutions issue express directions on this subject, and we know that the committee of S. Bartholomew's Hospital have issued instructions, through the Matron to the Ward Sisters, discouraging an excessive indulgence both in decoration and in merriment. This attitude is, we consider, a very wise one to take. The feeling of making merry at Christmas is so strong that there is bound, in any case, to be sufficient brightness infused into the day to mark it for the patients, and should any encouragement be given there are no limits to the lengths to which certain of the visitors, medical students, and some of the nursing staff, more energetic perhaps than wise, are prepared to proceed. There are very real objections to extensive decorations of evergreen, besides that of the time taken up in their preparation, and the disturbance which their hanging occasions. The necessity for protecting wards, as far as possible, from the entrance of the "wily microbe" appears to be lost sight of in many instances at Christmas time; but, nevertheless, the danger of the introduction of dirt with evergreens is a real one, and we know that a suggestion was made in one hospital that the death of a patient from tetanus was caused by the introduction of the tetanus microbe in the Christmas evergreens.

We think therefore that it is wisdom to limit the decorations to an extra amount of plants and cut flowers, the festivities to the time honoured roast beef and plum pudding for those who are well enough to partake of it, and the entertainments to those for such of the convalescent patients as are able to be moved from the wards to an empty ward or room temporarily arranged as an entertainment room. Professor McHardy, of King's College Hospital, has recently placed the question in a nutshell, before the representative of a contemporary. "Our hospitals" he says "are institutions for the sick, the suffering, and the dying—the acutely ill. They are bad enough to be in bed, not in a condition to go to concerts, and let me say, far from being in a condition to have concerts brought to them. Another reason, why I openly object to the concerts in hospitals is that there are often patients in the wards, at the time,

whose cases are very critical indeed; whose deaths, in fact, may be just at hand. It is scandalous that variety entertainers, however select and humane the performers in themselves may be, should be allowed to tour from ward to ward, generally bringing with them a piano, and other highly-pitched instruments. The critical patient cannot get better, or die by the clock or the calendar; and therefore, I say, better have no entertainment at all, than run the risk—and I have often seen such a risk incurred—of hastening the demise of a poor sufferer by the intrusion of a mistaken kindness. Nor should friends and relations of the sick poor be forgotten. Is it likely that at the eleventh hour of a dying man or woman they are in a fit state for joviality?"

Professor McHardy puts the case with some force, but we think not a whit too strongly. Hospitals are before all things for the treatment of the sick, and their welfare must be the first consideration.

At the same time we in no way wish to discourage the legitimate observance of this festive season. It is only natural that those who are responsible for the care of the sick in our hospitals should wish to bring as much brightness as possible into their sad lives at this festival, and that they receive encouragement and many expressions of gratitude from those who are able to enter into the spirit of the fun is certain. But discretion must be used, and any undue noise and excitement prevented. Sympathising visitors, and jovial young medics, are apt to overstep the lines dividing harmless fun from harmful frolic.

STATE CONTROL.

THE question of the necessity for some state control of the nursing profession has for years now been brought before the public. When the matter was inquired into before the Privy Council prior to the granting of the Royal Charter to the British Nurses' Association it was argued by the opponents to the Charter that there was no necessity for any control outside the hospitals inasmuch as the hospital authorities certificated their own nurses and that no state register could supersede the reference to the hospital where the nurse was trained, and consequently known. It was argued, on the other side, that many hospitals kept no registers of their nurses, that within a few years of nurses leaving their training-schools the hospital authorities

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