

Gould as Matron, came in for warm praise in that she "was deserving of the trust and confidence of the directors, as she had, during the year, maintained the nursing staff in a high state of efficiency. Miss Creal's personal efforts had been loyally supported by Senior Sister Johnston and the whole nursing staff. The changes made in this staff during the year were particularised, and mention was made of the fact that Senior Sister Johnston, with Sister Newton and Sister Bessie, had left for the Transvaal War."

\* \* \*

WE hear from a correspondent that there has been very little sickness in Cairo this season, and, consequently, many nurses who went out for the season have been out of work.

\* \* \*

INFORMATION has reached us from time to time of the low standard of nursing in Vienna, but we feel sure all nurses will be horrified at the state of things at the St. Joseph Hospital for Children, revealed in the course of a libel action against Mr. Paul Stellbogen for published accusations against Dr. Heim and Dr. Melzer. The defendant stated in the witness-box that two children of his were taken to the hospital, and the elder, who was suffering from diphtheria, was placed in the bed of a scarlet fever patient without any change of linen. He also charged Dr. Melzer with most cruel treatment of his boy aged five, who, he stated, inflicted fearful wounds on the stomach for purely experimental purposes. Other witnesses testified to the children being beaten and left half-starved and naked in bitterly cold wards while doctors and nurses played cards all night. It was also said that the hospital swarmed with vermin of all kinds, and the children were covered with fearful sores. When a child was found to be dying, its bed linen was removed, and it was left to die on the bare, cold, iron bedstead. Dramatic scenes took place in the court when the mothers of children done to death reviled and cursed Dr. Heim and Dr. Melzer, who were present, and prayed heaven to avenge the slaughter of their children. Such heartless cruelty on the part of women is difficult to imagine. The remedy for the disgraceful condition of the nursing at St. Joseph's Hospital, Vienna, is to appoint an efficient Superintendent of Nursing, and give her authority to enforce discipline and good nursing.

\* \* \*

Of the fourteen indictments laid before the jury against Stellbogen, a verdict of "guilty" was returned only on one. He was, nevertheless, fined fifty florins. The exposure of abuses requires some courage in these days.

## Nurses in Modern Fiction.

By MISS MARY GARDNER,

*Matron, the Birmingham and Midland Sanatorium.*

SOME time ago an article appeared in the NURSING RECORD entitled "Nurses in Fiction." It dealt with the fiction of a bygone day, and the examples quoted were of the type immortalised by Mrs. Gamp, with one exception, the Little Sister in Thackeray's "Philip"—an uneducated woman, but gentle and womanly withal.

The esteem in which nurses were held in the early part of this century is concisely illustrated in a passage from "The Woman in White," by Wilkie Collins. Refuting the popular impression that stout people are characteristically good-natured, he quotes examples of cruel and wicked stout people in history. Henry VIII. and Pope Alexander VI. are cited, and he goes on to ask, "Whether Mr. Murderer, and Mrs. Murderess Manning were not both unusually stout? Whether hired nurses, *proverbially as cruel a set of women as are to be found in all England,* were not, for the most part, also as fat a set of women as are to be found in all England?"

We fancy those old time nurses must have suffered not a little in representation through popular prejudice. Ignorant no doubt they were, when the calling of a nurse was beneath the notice of "respectable" domestic servants, and with the failings of ignorance, but it seems impossible to believe that the care of the sick on the whole could have been entrusted to a class of women utterly coarse, callous and cruel. There must have been some of the type of the Little Sister, some in whom familiarity with suffering aroused womanly compassion and tenderness instead of hardness of heart.

Although, with the growth and development of trained nursing, the public tone with regard to nurses has undergone transformation, they are still mis-represented, sometimes through prejudice, more often through a halo of false sentiment which tends to bring them into ridicule.

The most striking characteristics of the modern novel nurse seem to be that, like the poet, she is born, not made, and exists a law unto herself. Not for her the long and rigid discipline of training and the subsequent humdrum conditions of working strictly under orders. Fidelity to trust, the keynote of conscientious nursing is exchanged for the glorification of an individual. The picturesque figure and strong individuality of Sister Dora has apparently proved a tempting subject for copy to more than one novelist.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)