

tion for those working in hospitals in his diocese, and his example was subsequently followed by four other bishops. We further read that the Sisters of Mercy have never undertaken night duty, but the bishop, having the power to authorise the infringement of this rule, has done so in the case of two institutions. In others it is entrusted to trained nurses. It seems incomprehensible in these days that the efficient nursing of the sick should depend upon episcopal comprehension of their needs. It is time that the arrangement of an adequate nursing service should be vested in the Superintendent of Nursing and not in the Bishop of the Diocese.

A brief allusion to the St. John's Sisterhood in London, and to male nursing brotherhoods completes this section.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AS TO RELIGIOUS ORDERS.

1. Religious Orders are self-governing, independent of the institutions which employ them, and do not recognise either medical or administrative control when this comes in conflict with the rules of the Orders drawn up many years ago.

2. It is to be deplored that institutions, nominally under the control of one governing body, are constantly paralysed by the fact that their employes are subject to an authority which is very often in opposition to science and progress. Also it is constantly observable that reforms which are initiated are either openly or covertly repressed by the staff who believe these innovations to be inimical to the well-being of their own institutions. To them a conservative spirit is a virtue and a duty. To change anything in their Rule would be wanting in faithfulness to it.

3. As most Religious Orders refuse to care for all patients without distinction, they have been obliged to employ subordinates who are almost without exception ignorant and coarse. The result has been in most instances that the performance of all nursing duties has been handed over to these persons, the Sisters giving a general supervision. At night these ignorant men and women are placed in charge of the wards, and entrusted with the performance of nursing duties, the result being that patients die who might have been saved by efficient nursing.

4. Further it is observable in hospitals nursed by Religious Orders that though there may be uniformity of appearance in the wards, there are closed windows of opaque glass, curtains obstructing the view, all utensils needed by the sick are secreted in hiding places, often to the injury of the health of the sick. Again, the beds are only made twice a week, or even less frequently, but the quilts are well arranged, and the floors well polished, so that the sense of order of the good sisters is satisfied, for they are ignorant of the benefit which it is to a sick person to have his bed aired daily and the sheet carefully straightened underneath him. Small wonder that the nuns do not grasp the scientific aspect of nursing, or the need of surgical cleanliness. We even read of children's wards where the custom prevails of using two sponges for the washings of the whole ward, one for the faces of the patients and the other for their bodies.

Another objection advanced against the employment of nuns as nurses is that from motives of modesty they refuse to bare their arms. Again, it is stated that the shape of the caps worn by some nursing sisterhoods restricts their range of vision because the Abbe

who founded the Order thought it useful to furnish them with a species of blinker to protect them from painful sights!

But while the employment of Religious Orders as nurses for the sick has—more especially in France, to which the above remarks for the most part refer—grave disadvantages, it is noteworthy that the cost of nursing on these lines is in excess of that where a properly organised school is maintained. In such a school the probationer receives merely a nominal salary, or even pays for the instruction received. Members of a Sisterhood, on the other hand, receive a uniform salary, the latest novice being paid as much as the most experienced sister. This amount is small enough, indeed, being at the rate of £8 6s. 8d. a year. But the obligations of the committees of institutions to the Sisterhood concerned do not end here. They undertake to provide *for life* for all the sick or aged sisters, besides giving them pensions according to their length of service. This means much to the communities, but is a considerable charge on the hospital funds. It also means that sisters with no vocation for nursing remain indefinitely in charge of the sick, and that, to effect their removal, application to the Minister of the Interior is necessary. The author brings out further two facts. (1) That the essence of the organization of a Sisterhood consists in the repression of individuality and initiative, qualities most essential in a really good nurse, and (2) the natural sequence that countries where the nursing of hospitals is monopolised by Religious Orders are remarkable for the lack of nursing progress, whereas in countries not so handicapped the art of nursing has developed into a science.

Another result of the system is that those women who desire to devote themselves to the service of the sick have found, for generations, that the only means of attaining this end has been to enter a Religious Sisterhood. Thus the greater part of the French nation has been drained of women who, as lay persons, could have agitated for nursing reform, and who in the hands of Communities have been brought up, as regards nursing, on most obsolete lines.

After drawing attention to the devotion and the courage of the Religious Orders who nursed the French sick in the Crimean war, the author points out that these Sisters concerned themselves especially with spiritual work, and their efforts in no way lessened the mortality amongst the sick soldiers. The conclusion arrived at is that it does not follow that because a woman is good and religious that she can nurse efficiently, and that the admirable spirit of martyrdom exhibited by these Sisters is not all that is required in a nurse, for a hospital should not be simply an asylum for the dying, but a house of recovery.

We may mention in closing this subject one point which, in spite of all their deficiencies, must be reckoned to the credit of Religious Communities, namely, that they are inspired with the desire to render service to humanity, and that the members are women of blameless life and integrity. When we consider the efforts made to establish lay schools of nursing in France we shall see that this high moral standard has not always been maintained.

We shall deal fully with the question in a subsequent article, for we find this Thesis so full of interesting and important points that we have outrun the limits of an ordinary review, and propose to devote several articles to its consideration.

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