

A meeting of the members of the Dublin Nurses' Club was held on Wednesday evening, April 2nd, and was very well attended. The chief feature of the evening was the reading of essays by members of the club, for which two prizes were offered by the Directors of the City of Dublin Nursing Institution. The first essay, "The Preparation of and Nursing a Case of Abdominal Section throughout," was won by Miss Butler, of Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital, and the other, on "Manners," by Miss Young, of the City of Dublin Nursing Institution. Both essays were much appreciated by those present, and an interesting discussion followed.

The advantages gained by such competitions cannot be too highly commended, calculated as they are to stimulate the mental improvement of those who take part in them. It is to be hoped that during the next session of the Club an increasing number of the members will give it the benefit of their studies.

Dr. Anna Hamilton and Dr. Félix Régnault have just published a book of documentary evidence, containing a complete history of nursing. Commencing with that of the middle ages, and coming down to the present time, they deal particularly with the work done among the sick by the nuns. Without ignoring certain qualifications of the nuns, Drs. Hamilton and Régnault point out how contrary to all rules of hygiene are the rules, customs, and obligations of religious communities. In the first place, the nuns are untrained and perfectly ignorant of nursing, and yet to their care is confided the most precious of all things—human life. Those Crimean hospitals which were served by nuns were hotbeds of infection, and the death-rate was so high that thirty out of fifty-two nuns succumbed, while there was only one death among the regularly-trained nurses of the English Ambulance. Drs. Hamilton and Régnault cite a case which occurred two years ago, where a nun who had no previous experience of nursing was put in charge of thirty beds! It is contrary to order, and only because of a special dispensation that the nuns are allowed to turn back their coarse serge sleeves and show their arms. Their great collars and caps, too, are receptacles for microbes; but to do without them would be incompatible with the spirit of religious orders. Some surgeons, being unable to effect the disinfection of the sister, remove her from the invalid. What use, also, is it to speak to these nuns on the benefit of ventilation, and the necessity for removing all curtains and drapery, when their own rules compel them to have curtains, and to shut themselves within them at night? Drs. Hamilton and Régnault cite numerous instances in support of all their statements, proving the absolute impossibility

of having efficiency in any hospital while in the hands of nuns.

Dr. Marie, in a report on the work of nursing sisters, describes his visits to the asylums for the insane in the west of France, and eloquently advocates, on the facts he gives, the necessity of taking the management from the nuns, and placing properly trained lay nurses in charge. He declares that the subordinates of the nuns of the Bon Sauveur are incapable. M. Andrée Téry, reviewing this document in *La Fronde*, pities these unhappy girls, who do the hardest and most repulsive of the work for a miserable salary of twenty or thirty francs a month, and are condemned to slave or vegetate permanently in the lowest office. Dr. Marie states that medical authority is very secondary in these asylums. The doctors, having no control over the religious communities, are unable to introduce a modern and scientific system. Quite recently access to certain dormitories was not permitted, except with the consent and in company with the nuns, who alone held the keys. These nuns have the profoundest disdain for the new methods of hygiene, ablutions, antiseptics; and means for lighting and airing the cells are, as a rule, wanting. A common practice in these asylums is to shut up the poor epileptic or violent patients in a sort of bed or cupboard made in the wall, railed in like a cage, and leave them there—"menagerie cages" Dr. Napias calls them. But, if the Sisters are to be believed, the patients have a remarkable liking for these cages. These little impromptu arrangements do not hinder the nuns from using and abusing severer modes of correction. They have too frequently recourse to handcuffs, strait-waistcoats, and other instruments of torture and inquisition. As regards food, "The evening meals are everywhere insufficient, particularly for the workers." For there are a great many invalids obliged to work, and Dr. Marie writes very strongly upon this point. There is no need to read between the lines to see what he thinks of the apparent disinterestedness of these ladies. His criticisms are sufficient to characterise as vices the *régime* of these religious houses in establishments for the poor and suffering, especially in the amount of work extorted from the patients, the insufficient salaries paid to their subordinates, and the commercial advantage derived by the religious houses.

We learn with much regret that Miss Agnes S. Brennan, the much esteemed Superintendent of the Training School connected with Bellevue Hospital, New York, has resigned her position, also that Miss Irene Sutcliffe, for many years Superintendent of the Training School connected with the New York Hospital, has been seriously ill for several months and has resigned her appointment.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)