

English hospitals and methods. He is said to have done more real and practical hospital and nursing reform than anyone else, but it must not be forgotten that Dr. Bourneville is the real Voltaire of the nursing revolution, and that Mr. Mesureur is now in a position to ripen and develop the fruit of the tree which was planted some twenty-five to thirty years ago.

In fact the Assistance Publique (or help and assistance to the needy public) itself is better organised, and is divided into three departments:—

1. L'Hôtel Dieu, or hospitals.
2. L'Hopital Général, or infirmaries.
3. Le Grand Bureau des pauvres, or private help to families.

After the Revolution in 1849 this organisation held the name of "Administration des hopitaux et hospices civils de Paris," and was put into the hands of a General Council, but in a short time it was felt that this arrangement proved unsatisfactory, as it was treated with indifference and apathy by the General Council. The present organisation was then formed with one head, the Directeur-Général, and a *Conseil of Surveillance*, who limit his power.

There are forty-four hospitals and infirmaries in Paris under the Assistance Publique, L'Hôtel Dieu being the oldest; it was built by St. Landry, a bishop of the seventh century. It is the fine hospital near the beautiful old church Notre Dame de Paris, and at one time had several hospitals attached to it and governed by it, and it must have been under the administration of Notre Dame, for we hear that "in the sixteenth century Louis XII. took away from the monks the power of administration and put it in the hands of laymen." This must have been a great blow to them, as it was the Assistance Publique of the period, and must have lessened their power considerably.

This was only the thin edge of the wedge, for Louis XIV. secularised the Salpêtrière and Bicêtre, and Louis XVIII. took away from all the religious orders the power of administration and expenditure, leaving the nuns in the hospitals as nurses of the sick only. But they evidently got the power in their hands again, for the big Revolution overthrew them, and though the first empire reinstalled them, they were again turned out after the last revolution, except at the Hôtel Dieu, which is the property of the Sisters of St. Augustin; but even here they are under the laws, rules, and regulations of the Assistance Publique.

Thus it will be seen that the Assistance Publique is an old institution and secularisation, and the return to power of the nuns an old and historical struggle, and by no means a sign of modern progress. That is why I very much doubt whether nuns in a Catholic country will ever die out; and though the power is in the hands of the present Government, yet neither the clerical party nor even the royalists (frequently the one implies the other)

have yet been crushed; their influence is still felt in the country as was seen by the way Bordeaux and other schools were overthrown. The French at the bottom are a religious and superstitious nation, the priest and the nun have a power over them, and they are more likely to believe in good works as a vocation than as a profession, and they do not understand the practical form it takes with the Anglo-Saxon race, nor yet with Protestantism. The deaconess to them is an anomaly; "women with half-vows who marry when they can find a husband" are not attractive creatures to them, and I must say I agree with them, and they have been anything but a success in France, and I doubt whether there are as many as 100 of them all over France, for even French Protestants have not taken to the idea.

But what the modern nursing movement has done is that nuns and their supporters have understood that devotion and vocation do not replace knowledge and skill. Still the majority think that the two ought to be combined.

It certainly would seem perfect to unite knowledge with absolute abnegation were it not that we have the proof that the life of nuns stunts the growth and development of their minds, that nursing in these days must go hand in hand with science, and that their lives and characters are opposed to progress, their first aim and object being the salvation of their souls, and second, of those of their patients, frequently at the cost of their recovery.

(To be continued.)

The Select Committee on Nursing.

In reply to a question from Dr. Hutchinson (Rye) the Prime Minister stated in the House of Commons on Wednesday that the Select Committee to inquire into the question of Registration of Nurses would be reappointed in a few days.

The R. B. N. A. Bill.

On Monday last Mr. Claude Hay (member for Shoreditch, Hoxton) introduced into the House of Commons, on behalf of the Royal British Nurses' Association a Bill which was read for the first time:—

"To provide for the better training and registration of nurses and for the voluntary registration of private nursing homes."

The Passing Bell.

We regret to record the death last week of Miss Jane Catherine Shaw Stewart, sister of the late Sir Michael Shaw Stewart, of Ardgowan, Greenock. She was associated with Miss Florence Nightingale in active nursing work in the military hospitals in the Crimea.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)