

### Sick Nursing in France.

If it is always good to see ourselves as others see us, our nursing institutions and those who are interested in their welfare will derive much encouragement from the account given by Dr. Marc Blatin in a recent book on medical nursing and nurses.\* He gives first a history of nursing in France, and an account of existing provisions for the nursing of the sick in hospital and private practice; he then describes the English nursing system, and makes a series of suggestions for the betterment of nursing as an occupation in France, adding a plea for its organisation along the lines which have proved so successful in this country.

Dr. Blatin ascribes the superiority of the English system to the popularity of nursing among the middle and upper classes, to the thoroughness of the training which is enforced, to the discipline which governs nursing institutions and the nursing departments of hospitals, and to the exclusion of men from the immediate government and direction of nursing affairs. He lays special stress upon the thoroughness with which English nurses are taught their profession.

The English have applied to the instruction of their nurses the great principle which they apply throughout in the matter of education to their engineers, men of business, soldiers, and sailors: "C'est en forgeant qu'on devient forgeron." Nurses have no need of elaborate theories. On the other hand, they ought to be acquainted with a mass of practical details which they cannot learn from books. The old principle is therefore applicable and applied to them with the greatest advantage.

In France, even at the present day, the position which nurses occupy is eminently unsatisfactory, and the circumstances by which the calling is surrounded make it but little attractive to the class of young woman best suited for the discharge of the onerous duties which belong to it. As a profession it is miserable, "less on account of the insufficiency of the emoluments than from the hardness of the work, the absolute lack of comfort, and the position of inferiority which the nurse occupies." In addition to this the food is inadequate and badly prepared, the number of nurses is too small for the requirements of the various hospital services, and the hygienic conditions amidst which they are compelled to live are inexcusably defective. The consequence of all this is an appalling mortality which must naturally go far towards rendering the service unpopular.

But according to the account given by Dr. Blatin, it is not only in the nursing department of French hospitals that organisation is defective, the whole routine of procedure and management seems sadly in want of renovation. The following lurid de-

\* *Le Soignage Médical et les Infirmières. Ce qu'elles sont en France, ce qu'elles sont en Angleterre, ce qu'elles devraient être.* By Dr. Marc Blatin. Paris: J. B. Baillière et Fils. 1905. (Demy 8vo., pp. 276. Fr. 3.50.)

scription of a busy operating day in one of the hospitals is painfully realistic and pitifully gruesome:—

A dresser, with bared arms, blood-stained apron, and tongue-forceps hooked in his button-hole, emerges hastily from the operating theatre. He searches for the patient whom he has been instructed to anaesthetise. "It is you, Number 10," he says, "who are to be operated upon this morning for hernia?" "Yes, sir." Without further remark he pours the chloroform on the towel. The patient becomes agitated. He calls for a male nurse or a student. Every one is busy; the dresser becomes annoyed, and the patient struggles violently. At last a male nurse arrives, and throws himself half across the bed in order to hold down the patient, who now breathes stertorously and makes noisy efforts to vomit. The door of the operating theatre opens to let the wheeled litter pass out, on which has been placed a livid patient who has just been under operation; behind him follows an attendant carrying a bundle of blood-stained linen. Again the door swings open disclosing the surgeon or house-surgeon: "Come along, is he completely under the anaesthetic? It is the tenth—I should say the twelfth—laparotomy. Let us have this one, and let the next be anaesthetised at once!" And the operation cases follow one after another into this mysterious and awe-inspiring theatre, from which they return swathed in cotton wool and motionless like corpses. The surgeon departs, goes back to his private work, the assistant or the house-surgeon replaces him, and the sad procession of cases continues. The noisy exclamations of alcoholic patients as they are being got under chloroform, and the pitiful groanings of those who have been operated upon as they emerge from their anaesthetic, never cease for a moment. And all this without a sympathetic word being said to any of these unfortunates who are waiting their turn, and who naturally exaggerate a hundredfold the suffering and danger to which they are about to be exposed. In an English hospital no patient ever dies alone. A nurse is detailed for special duty in every moribund case. He is assured of having, up to the last moment of his life some one to help to mitigate his final sufferings. In Paris the moribund patient passes away alone among frightened neighbours who turn away from him; in the midst of busy work, almost in touch with passing dressers and nurses, who, while bustling over their work, throw smiles to the students. Flies cover his face and crawl round his eyes, his feeble hands make vain attempts to pull up the sheet, and the rattle in his throat is heard throughout the ward as a pitiful and sustained appeal, without it occurring to any one to adjust the bed clothes, to chase away the flies, or to separate the dying man's lips that he may breathe better. The rattling ceases. He is dead!

We hope that this picture is overdrawn, and that Dr. Blatin may have spread his colours too thickly in order to reinforce the attempt now being made in Paris to establish a nursing system on lines which will, in time, make such a scene as that above described impossible. An Association pour le Développement de l'Assistance aux Malades has been established in the Rue Amyot, under the superintendence of Mlle. Schärer, and it is hoped that from this initial enterprise a school of nurses may rapidly be formed

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