

The Hospital World.

THE RADCLIFFE INFIRMARY, OXFORD.

The casual visitor to Oxford is naturally so engrossed with the bewildering number and fascinating beauty of colleges, chapels, and gardens that he has little time or attention to spare for buildings which, strictly speaking, are non-collegiate. But the Radcliffe Infirmary, bound up from the very sources of its existence with the University, and standing in the very heart of the Collegiate city, deserves more than a passing glance. It was first opened on St. Luke's Day, 1770, more than fifty years after the death of its founder, Dr. John Radcliffe, who, having taken his degree at University College, Oxford, where he was entered at the early age of fifteen, practised medicine for some years in that town. Dr. Radcliffe afterwards settled in London, and not only gained much popularity as physician to their Majesties William and Mary, and Queen Anne, but amassed great wealth, some of which he bequeathed to existing institutions, and the rest for the foundation of new ones. In St. Bartholomew's Hospital there is a "Radcliffe" Ward, commemorating the name of the great doctor, but perhaps few even of those intimately connected with the hospital know that it is to his beneficence that an annual sum of £100 is provided "for the purchase of linen," and £500 per annum "towards mending the diet."

The Radcliffe Infirmary, which now contains 150 beds, presents to the public eye only a small frontage, standing back from the Woodstock Road. This block of grey stone buildings, which comprised the whole of the original hospital, is approached through one of those quiet quadrangles so characteristic of Oxford, with pond and fountain in the centre, where tame gold and silver fish, water-tortoises, and other queer creatures flourish. Behind this front building, now used exclusively as a Nurses' Home and administrative block, stretch the new wards, built at various times since 1863, flanked on one side by Somerville College, and on the other by the Radcliffe Observatory. It is a matter of almost pathetic regret to the Matron that she has had difficulties with both of her neighbours. The "observers" complain of old poultices alleged to have been thrown over the wall and consumed by unsuspecting cows, in spite of assurances that poultices are an almost obsolete form of medical treatment; and, on the other hand, the Principal of Somerville finds cause for annoyance in the smoke from the hospital laundry, a department which is now making worthy returns for much strenuous labour and thought expended on its development.

No sooner had the University term ended than spring cleaning commenced in the hospital, for, as was explained by the Matron, who was kind enough to personally conduct me through, though they are very busy all the year round, it is impossible to do

any alteration work during term time. Just now building operations are in progress, balconies extending the whole length of the blocks being in course of erection on one side of the wards. These balconies, roomy and substantial, will be a great boon to patients who can be wheeled out or lifted on to couches to enjoy the air and the pleasant view of the gardens, which are already freely used by convalescents. Indeed, many of the rapid "cures" effected in the hospital are ascribed to the system of turning the patients out into these secluded gardens at as early a date of convalescence as possible. The tennis courts, kept in order by the Medical School, are reserved on two evenings in the week for the nursing staff. A corridor, opening into the various blocks, runs the whole length of the building, and ends in the little chapel, which, by the way, boasts an altar-frontal of exceeding beauty. The operating theatre, built in 1899, is a triumph of modern hospital construction, and the pride and delight of all who are professionally connected with it. The patient is wheeled into a small receiving chamber to be put under the anæsthetic, and then passed into the operating-room, which he leaves by another exit through a small corridor into the main one leading to the wards. Thus, while one operation is going forward, another patient can be prepared in the receiving-room to take his place without delay. A theatre sister and two nurses have charge of these "marble halls" of surgery.

Last of all, I was shown over the Nurses' Home, which, with the exception of the administrative offices and the wing appropriated to the use of the resident medical officers (three in number), occupies the whole of the original building. It is to the untiring energy of the Matron, Miss Watt, who has occupied her present position since 1897, that the chief credit is due for many of the improvements in the Home, and certainly the nurses are to be congratulated on the high degree of comfort they enjoy.

The old wards, small and inconvenient as such, have been turned into bedrooms, distributed over three floors, with a bathroom to each set of eight, and each member of the staff has one to herself. Never have I seen such nurses' bedrooms in a hospital before; big and quaintly shaped, each with its little table and bookshelves, and great window looking out on to quiet, shady lawns and gardens, whose rich perfection is the reward of generations of careful tending.

Passing a heavy oak door at the end of a corridor, I was informed that it led to the Night Nurses' apartments, and though it could be opened from within it was locked on the outside to prevent the supply of surreptitious cups of tea by misguided friends on the day staff!

The nurses' sitting-room has an air of luxury and quiet dignity entirely in keeping with the associations of the hospital; and the great charm of this,

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