

## Our Foreign Letter.

### NOTES ON SPANISH HOSPITALS.

When I wrote in THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING recently of the Spanish medical missionary—San Juan



de Dios—I had only visited the orphanage which he founded in Granada. Since then, however, I have been over the General Hospital for the sick,

the foundation and endowment of which is also due to San Juan de Dios, though the present building is not more than two centuries old. It occupies two quadrangles, one large and the other small, and the interior is being renovated and improved by degrees, for, as may be readily imagined, it does not satisfy all modern requirements. The latest of these improvements is the building—not yet finished—of bath-rooms. This is the gift of a private individual, though the hospital belongs to the Government. At the Revolution the Government appropriated the whole of the endowments of San Juan de Dios, at the same time undertaking to keep the hospital supplied with food, medicine, &c. Most of the hospitals in Spain are maintained, and, it is to be feared, very poorly maintained, by the Government. There are ugly rumours that the patients are badly stinted both in food and medicine.

The reason of this stint seems to be the terrible frequency of corruption on the part of officials in so many departments of Government in Spain. Complaints are made, and the evil for the time rectified, but peculation returns, and the sick and helpless suffer. It has been gravely stated that in one hospital in Spain the food supplies go in at one end of the building and out again at the other, and are then sold for the benefit of some unconscientious officials! This *may* be exaggeration, but that there is more than a foundation of truth in the story is not denied. Indeed, when speaking of this to an English lady who has lived in Spain for some years she said she believed it was absolute truth. The result of such poor feeding is that the patients' friends bring them food, and the supervision of the nourishment taken by the sick becomes a mere farce. Similarly, prisoners in Spain are so scantily fed that their friends take them food regularly.

On making inquiries as to when I could visit the hospital, Don Juan—*z*—\*, a well-known doctor of Granada, most courteously offered to take us over it.

We first went into three wards on the ground floor, our conductor remarking that these were not the best in the hospital. In two of these wards the tiled floors were in very bad order, but were about to be repaired. One of these ground floor wards was for operation cases, and was quite empty, for the following reason. It was vacation time, and during the vacation, which lasts from June to October, only urgent operations are performed.

The Hospital of San Juan de Dios contains rather

\* In Spain a man has two surnames, as he takes his mother's name as well as his father's. But he is called by his friends by his Christian name only. For obvious reasons I do not give the name.

more than 400 beds. It is the only general hospital for the town of Granada, a town of 75,000 inhabitants, and one of the largest cities of Spain. Not only this, but it is also the chief hospital for the province of Andalusia. And the chaplain, who accompanied us on our tour of inspection, said that the greater number of the patients come from Malaga and Cordova! There is a hospital at Malaga, and also, I believe, at Cordova, still it is considered necessary to send patients from those cities to San Juan de Dios, which ranks high amongst the hospitals of Spain. Fewer come from Seville, which is rather a longer journey by rail. The patients are admitted without payment on a letter of recommendation. The larger of the wards contain fifty beds. Those on the ground floor had an average of eight beds. There is an accident ward, but Don Juan remarked that there were not many accident cases. This did not surprise us, as no one is in a hurry in Spain!

The wards were, for the most part, fairly airy, with vaulted ceilings, and were ventilated by large windows on one side and small skylights. The ground floor wards had windows on both sides. Every ward had an altar at one end. The hospital is nursed by the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, and this nursing order has charge of nearly all the hospitals in Spain. In each ward, under the Sister, are two or three assistants who do not wear any uniform, and are not trained nurses as we understand the term. In the men's wards the assistants are men. Only one doctor lives in the hospital. But ten or twelve visit at it, and have wards. The doctor seemed proud of the new wire mattresses, which they are gradually introducing through the wards. I noticed that the bedding was rough, and the sheets none too clean. We went into one ward, which is endowed by a private benefactor; it was inconveniently crowded with beds, all of which were occupied. The other wards were arranged as in England, the beds in rows down each side.

Outside galleries run round the quadrangles where the patients who are convalescing can walk or sit. The operating room, for it is not arranged like a theatre, was fairly large and convenient in shape, and had another room opening out of it. On the occasion of our visit it was partly dismantled, for, as I have already said, only the most urgent operations take place during the vacation. This room has no artificial light, and is not even lighted from the top. On expressing my surprise at this omission, I was told that there was a small room in another part of the hospital fitted with electric light, which is used for operations when necessary; but in this land of the sun there is not often a lack of natural light in the daytime.

Paying patients can be received into the hospital and can have separate rooms if required. There is an incurable ward. Also a separate house for infectious cases in the garden adjacent to the main building. I understand that the regulations in Granada as regards the sending of infectious cases to the hospital, if it is impossible to isolate them properly in their own homes, are as strict as in England. We visited the kitchen, which is in the basement, and struck me as rather small for the requirements of a large hospital. Cooking had ceased for the day, the hour being a little past 6 p.m.

Afterwards we went over the School of Medicine attached to San Juan de Dios, which is in a separate building close at hand, of much more modern construction than the hospital. There are about 300

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