

ties and hardships also increased. For the poor the most expensive and up-to-date treatment was available in hospitals, including treatment by light, Röntgen rays, and radium, which last, if it could not certainly cure one of the most terrible diseases of our day, could at least minimise its pain. For the rich the advantages of modern science were readily procurable in illness, but between the two extremes was a wide gap which the Medical Aid Society was helping to bridge over.

Dr. May Thorne said that few people realised the trouble and distress which befel necessitous ladies in time of illness. With many women very little separated them from comparative prosperity and utter misery. Their health was their only asset, and directly illness came their happiness was upset, and if there was no one to help them their poverty was frightful and their misery of the gravest. When one's substitute for a kitchen fire consisted of a one-third share of a gas ring, the heating even of a glass of milk was attended with difficulty in illness.

Canon E. E. Holmes said that in making appeals for many societies there was an element of beauty which attracted, but the report which had just been presented was a revelation of drab, sordid, commonplace ugliness. The cases helped by the Society were so pathetic and pitiful because they were nearly always those of persons who had been in a higher station of life. He thought most women would agree that if the prettiness was taken out of a woman's life it was the first step towards deterioration. He spoke of the attics in which he had visited cultured, refined, well-educated ladies, in which prettiness was wholly absent.

He proceeded to give an instance of a lady who called upon him a few months ago, and who practically fainted in the passage. A doctor whom he called in certified that she was fainting from want of food; she was starving. His visitor was a highly educated, clever, Girton girl, who had been in Natal teaching where she lost an eye, which had caused disfigurement. Her father had died and left her unprovided for, and she had sunk to life in an attic in a small street, and literally had not one penny. He gave her a packet of tea that she might make tea at home for herself, but he had not realised the poverty to which this gift was useless, in which there was no means of heating the water to make the tea. Eventually he gave his visitor money, and the first thing she bought was a cake of soap. Through the Medical Aid Society she had been supplied with an artificial eye, and it was now endeavouring to find a situation for her.

Lady Grove, who asked for financial help for the Society, said that too often marriage was regarded as the only profession for women, and they were not educated for any other, but it was a profession which was impossible to all. The removal of sex disabilities, so that women might be in fair position as wage earners was a necessity. She regarded the work of the Society as a temporary thing, which would be rendered unnecessary when better conditions prevailed, but until such time she pleaded for its financial support.

A warm tribute was paid to the valuable work of the Hon. Secretary, Miss M. E. Green.

## Our Foreign Letter.

### A FOUNDLING HOSPITAL IN FLORENCE.



Built by Brunelleschi in the fifteenth century, the Ospedale degli Innocenti at the present time numbers some

five thousand inmates, counting doctors, nurses, and attendants as well as the babies. Nearly every visitor to Florence knows the facade of the Innocenti in the Piazza dei Servi, for it is ornamented with fourteen medallions of *Putti*, i.e., babies swathed in the Italian fashion; ten of these charming medallions in blue and white Della Robbia ware, are by Andrea della Robbia, and have smiled down on the Florentines for more than four hundred years. But only a small proportion of those visitors enter the actual hospital, they stop short in the courtyard and the Church, where there are other works of both Andrea and Luca della Robbia. For a visit to a Foundling Hospital must of necessity be a sad sight, and burns into brain and heart an ineffaceable memory. But the wards are light and airy, and the general impression on the mind of the visitor is, that no expense or trouble has been spared to give these poor little mites the best of substitutes for that natural care and love which has been denied them. The Hospital is nursed by the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, according to the most usual custom in Roman Catholic countries. And here, I am tempted to give in a few words a sketch of the life of one of the most practical saints in the Roman Calendar.

St. Vincent was born in the year 1576 in the South-West of France, within sight of the Pyrenees. He was the son of poor peasants, and as a small child, tended his father's few sheep. Always of a generous and loving disposition, he would give away anything he could to those who were poorer than himself. If sent to the mill with corn to be ground he would even give a handful of flour to any beggar whom he met on the way back. When he was twelve years old, his father decided that he should be trained for the priesthood, and sent him to a Franciscan school at Dax. He was still quite a young man when he was seized by pirates whilst sailing on the Mediterranean from Marseille to Narbonne and taken prisoner to Tunis where he was sold as a slave. After changing masters several times, he was bought by an apostate from Christianity, who finally decided to return to his religion and to Europe with Vincent, and the two escaped in a small boat to France. From thence he went with his former master to Rome, where the latter entered a charitable order, probably that of San Juan de Dios. Here Vincent was introduced at the Papal Court, and later on was sent to the French Court, where he became almoner to Queen Margaret. But St. Vincent had no taste for Courts; his heart was with the suffer-

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