

NURSING ECHOES.

The mid-session address delivered before the Abernethian Society at St. Bartholomew's Hospital by Mr. D'Arcy Power, F.S.A., on "Some Episodes in the History of the Hospital," reminds us that Bart's nurses, anyway, have great traditions.

From a succession of most realistic visions the Lecturer describes Episodes in the history of the wonderful old hospital, which we hope may be reprinted in pamphlet form.

Of the nursing he writes:—

"At this time too (in the sixteenth century), I remember we got our lay sisters and nurses under a matron instead of those meek sisters who used to be directed by the Mother Superior as to what they might and might not do. The work of nursing was a new thing to our lay sisters, and it was necessary to keep them a little more strictly than is now the case. They came not out of the ward every night after the hour of seven o'clock in the winter and after nine o'clock in the summer except some great and special cause befel—as the present danger of death or the needful succour of some poor person. They washed and purged the unclean clothes of the patients and other things, and, in their spare time when they were not occupied about the poor, they were set to spinning the flax, provided by the governors of the Hospital, or to such other manner of work that may avoid idleness and be profitable to the poor of the house. Knitting and crochet work have now replaced the more useful spinning. Above all things they were told to abhor and detest scolding as a most pestilent and filthy vice. Money perhaps went farther in those days, but the sisters were no more overpaid then than they are now.

A.D. 1747.—They acquired in time a right to certain small perquisites, of which our governors found it hard to deprive them. Thus the matron had an old and accustomed fee of one shilling for the use of a pall to cover the coffin of every patient buried from the Hospital, whilst the sisters did demand and take of the patients and their friends one shilling for earthenware and other necessaries and the nurses likewise sixpence. The nursing staff in the wards devoted to the reception of patients to be cut for the stone had a special allowance, the sister half a crown for each operation and the nurse or helper there one shilling. In the two fluxing wards or foul wards for the reception of the class of patients which is now

admitted to the "Shelter" in Golden Lane the sister received six shillings and sixpence for every patient who was salivated, but in return she had to provide flannels and other necessaries and pay her nurses one shilling.

A.D. 1821.—There were 24 wards in the Hospital nursed by a staff of 24 sisters, 48 nurses and 26 night nurses. The salaries of the sisters ranged from fourteen to twenty-seven shillings a week, whilst the nurses received seven shillings a week, and the night nurses ninepence a night. It is not surprising if the women who were tempted by these wages should sometimes develop into the prototypes of Mrs. Gamp, Betsy Prig, and Mrs. Harris. They were, however, the exceptions, for I know that a searching investigation was made into every department of the Hospital, and it was reported that "there was no complaint of any misbehaviour of the sisters or nurses of this Hospital, and the committee is of opinion that the sisters and nurses have done their duty." The predecessors of our present magnificent nursing staff, uneducated as they were, could still have taught us much that is valuable in the art of practical nursing and the handling of sick men and women. Indeed, I often think as I watch our present sisters and nurses going so deftly about their work that much of what they do is based upon the tradition handed down from these women, and is the accumulated experience of nearly 400 years.

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I have to-night told you many visions of things past: there remains one of a thing to come. I have a vision of a time when the present nurses' home shall have been swept away, and in its place there has arisen in Little Britain a fine building with a good lounge, a pleasant drawing-room, a well-equipped library, fine baths, plenty of hot and cold water, a separate little bedroom for each, a lift for tired nurses, and an infirmary on the topmost floor made as little like a hospital ward as possible. Such a building has been long overdue, but it must come, for our present arrangements are disgraceful and are a standing reproach to the great City of which we have formed an integral part for nearly a thousand years."

In reference to the letter published in Echoes last week, doing some little justice to the very excellent work in the reorganisation of the nursing department at the York County Hospital by the retiring Matron, Miss K. Stewart, we are informed that this lady resigned on a question of principle. It appears that until recently the custom of appointing

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