

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.*

It is not often that one is fortunate enough to happen on a book which breaks new ground, dealing with a subject which is intensely interesting in a most interesting way, but all these conditions are present in the book before us, which is "the first attempt, historically, to bring together the data relative to the revival of the Religious Life among us" since the Reformation, though in "A History of Nursing" (Nutting & Dock) we have a most interesting survey of the Military Nursing Orders, the Rise of the Secular Orders, the later Mediæval Orders, and of St. Vincent de Paul and the Sisters of Charity.

For nurses who wish to understand the history of their profession some knowledge of that of the religious orders is essential, for many communities, both Roman and Anglican, have largely devoted themselves to the care of the sick, and have enriched the traditions of our profession by the example of saintly lives and the record of devoted service. The Duke of Argyll, in a most interesting preface to the book, writes:—"Have the readers of this volume ever pondered over that great list of Abbesses and Queens, 192 in number, all of the Saxon period, which appears in the *Liber Vitae* of Durham (Surtees Society). In that great Bede's roll, without any indication of what Abbey they ruled, or what Kings they had once been wedded to, flaming in gold and silver lettering, stand those strange Saxon names. Here and there we can identify one or two for certain, and that is about all. Of some we know the great Houses over which they once bore rule in Saxon England, others must be the otherwise unrecorded successes of Saints like Hilda, or of those whose very

foundations may have vanished in the Danish invasions.

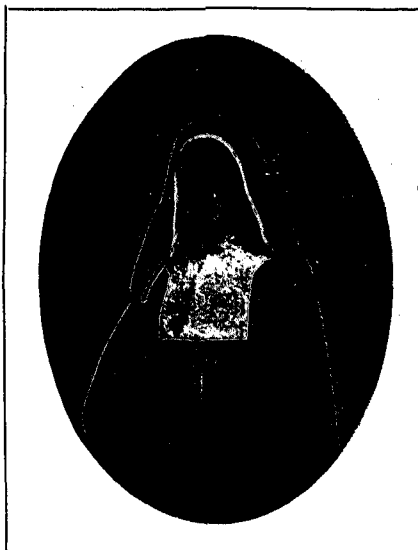
"Up and down the English realm stand countless reminders of England's sainted nuns and abbesses whose names are still remembered by entries in fading calendars. Oxford reveres the

Abbess Frydeswyde as its special Patroness and Protectress. Far away on the Cornish headlands S. Ia raised a home of prayer by storm-sick seas. S. Bega did as much further north on the Irish Channel. Kent, the Garden of England, produced an extraordinary contribution to the number of S. Scholastica's daughters, for in an older Folkestone now beneath the waves stood the Abbey ruled by S. Eanswythe, daughter of the Kentish King. S. Sexburgha, Queen of Kent, built S. Mary's Abbey at Sheppey, and died as a nun at Ely, under her sister S. Ætheldreda. SS. Mildred, Eadburgha, and many more, all of royal blood, flourished in Kent and left sweet memories behind them which will last as long as history endures

and pens remain to commemorate those early teachers of S. Benedict's Rule."

It is impossible to deal *in extenso* with all the sections of a book already so condensed. The first part includes an account of Sisterhoods, active and contemplative, and deals with the all-important question of "Vocation," or the call of God to a religious life. "The groundwork of such a life is the persuasion of each member that God has called her entirely to forego the claims of society and family, and devote herself wholly, entirely, and unreservedly to the work of God, whether actively or contemplatively, in the direction which He points out."

It is interesting that the first suggestion for the formation of a Sisterhood in England since the days of the "Tudor Pillage" was made by Rev. Alex. R. C. Dallas, in the interests of the sick. As curate of Woburn his intercourse with the poor led him to feel very keenly the lack of proper nursing



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