

NURSING HISTORY.

NURSES AND NURSING AT ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL IN OLDEN TIMES. BY C. J. THOMPSON, M.B.E.

Probably no hospital in the world has a more interesting history and unbroken record of its Sisters and Nurses than St. Bartholomew's. The annals, which were transcribed by the late Sir Norman Moore, Bart., the able historian of the hospital, show, that as early as the twelfth century, the four sisters who were at that time appointed to attend the inmates of the hospital, formed part of the body corporate.

Their names were Edena, daughter of Wakerilda of Writele, who became a sister during the reign of King John, Isabella of Bray who served in the time of Henry III, and Joan Pertenhale during the reign of Edward III, but the name of the fourth is not recorded.

These sisters wore the habit of the Augustinian Order, which continued until the Tudor period, when the chief female attendants were known as Sisters, a title which has survived for nearly four hundred years. One Sister was called the Matron, who was regarded as responsible over the others, and she had special duties also assigned to her. The first of this historic line mentioned by name is Rose Fysshier, who held office in February 14th, 1551.

She had a distinctive uniform, or livery as it was called in those days, which was made of russet frieze at first, but in 1555 was changed to watchett or light blue, which was also worn by the other Sisters. It is an interesting fact that this colour varied in tint, has continued for the Sisters throughout the past three centuries to the present day.

The first complete list of Sisters dates from March 18th, 1553, and their names were Elizabeth Clark, Jone Goodyere, Alys Wright, Elizabeth Trewilliam, Kateryn Marshall, Alys Youglive, Sybyll Jelly, Marget Edymans, Jone Cantrell, Eve Williams, Johan Lamporte and "The Foole."

Who and what was the fool is a matter of conjecture. Sir Norman Moore thought that the name was given to a young woman whose duty was to amuse the other Sisters, like the fools that were kept at that period in the great houses. But we think it is more probable that it was the name given to the youngest of the Sisters, or perhaps the one last appointed and who had the least experience, as in a list made two years later, instead of "The Foole" she is called "The Innocent." At this time it is recorded that the Matron received 4 yards of cloth and each Sister 2½ yards, but the "Innocent or Foole" was only allowed 2½ yards of this material.

NURSING IN TUDOR TIMES.

At the period when the hospital accommodation was limited to 100 patients, each Sister had the sole charge of nine or ten, as at that time there were no other nurses.

Hand-looms were installed in the hospital and as cloth was woven and spun in the wards, the hum of the spinning wheel must have been constantly heard. Thus on May 31st, 1550, twenty-one pairs of sheets were delivered to the Matron "cut out of cloth woven and spun by the Sisters," as she was held responsible for all the linen and woollens. Among other responsibilities the Matron had charge of the brandy, and the amount purchased from Lady Day, 1585, to the same date in 1587, cost £3 10s., but apparently she was only allowed £2 10s. for it.

The Sisters had to fetch the bread and drinks from the buttery bar, but the Matron sold ale in her house, until it was forbidden in 1559. That the supply of drinkables must have continued is evidenced from an Order of the Court made on June 3rd, 1643, which "prohibited tippling

in the Matron's cellar and instructed that no beer was to be kept there."

The first mention of the use of soap in the hospital, is in an allowance made to the Matron for washing her clothes on April 30th, 1558. Previous to this date the Sisters appear to have used wood ashes, which they probably boiled with oil in order to make a crude soft soap, a custom still practised in some parts of the country.

With the introduction of coal for use in the hospital, the supply of wood ashes came to an end, and so the Sisters had to buy it for their "bucke" or general washing, and were eventually granted an extra eightpence a week "for their 'bucke'" in 1586.

In nursing and spinning they spent the day in their wards, and at night they all slept together in a common room.

The first appointment of a special cook was made on account of a complaint having been made on September 17th, 1586, that the cook "was not making good and wholesome pottage for the poor and ill-dressing their meat," whereupon Sister Katherine Collinson was appointed to dress the meat and make the pottage, and on October 15th "she was confirmed in the office of cook at a yearly stipend of 40s., together with £4 for her food and livery as the Sisters."

In 1645, the Sisters were increased to fifteen, as provision had to be made for nursing the soldiers that had been wounded at the battle of Naseby, and for each military patient the "Sisters were to receive a gratuity of ten shillings."

Complaints were not unknown in those days, for we find on July 26th, 1647, that the Sister of Diet Ward was reported "as she does not come to her ward before 9 a.m. and scolds the patients," and on March 26th of the following year, Jane Baker, a Sister in St. Mary's Ward, was dismissed "for abusing the patients and exacting for washing a penny a shift."

On September 4th, 1648, three patients complained that a Sister had kept 4s. and a blue coat without rendering an account to the Matron, from a patient who had died in her ward." As punishment she was dismissed, but on the following Saturday was allowed to return, but was put in the youngest Sister's place (probably "The Innocent") in Naples Ward, and to beat the "bucke as a young Sister," from which we may infer that the younger Sisters had to do the hard work on wash-days.

On May 2nd, 1664, a Sister laid a complaint, that "the Sister of Charity Ward abused the steward and called him a knave." What happened afterwards the records do not state.

NURSES IN THE STUART PERIOD.

The first mention of women being engaged to help the Sisters and to take night work is in 1652, when Margaret Whitaker was appointed on "February 16th, who had been a nurse and helper in this howse for 5 yeeres past and was to have the next vacancy for a sister." From this it would appear that women-helpers were employed before that period. In 1678 several other helpers were admitted, and it was ordered that they should be given preference if thought fit on the vacancy for a Sister's post.

Scurvy grass, from which an ale was brewed, was largely used in the seventeenth century, so it is not surprising to find it was dispensed at St. Bart's in 1669. On October 16th of that year a brewer is ordered "to supply ale to make Scurvy grass drink," and in 1677, the steward was deputed to buy four measures of pewter, to be used in the scurvy grass cellar, viz., gallon, pottle, quart and pint.

No out-patient was allowed to have any scurvy grass ale, "unless directed by the doctor to drink thereof and it be entered in the apothecary's book."

In 1681 the apothecary reported that the 100 patients required mutton diet and broth in spring and fall, and the

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