

THE PASSING BELL.

The death of Dr. George Matthew Robertson, Professor of Psychiatry, in the University of Edinburgh, leaves both the world of psychiatry and mental nursing the poorer. Foremost in the advancement of mental nursing, which in Scotland has always been on a higher level than in England, he proclaimed and practised thirty years ago his belief in the face of strenuous opposition that mental wards should be in charge of women nurses with general training, and from this he never deviated. He always regarded mental hospitals not as places of detention but of healing.

We regret to record the death at Lincoln on March 5th, of Miss Inge Bröchner, Superintendent of the Hants County Nursing Association. Miss Bröchner, who was trained at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, was the only daughter of the late Kield Bröchner, of Elloughton, Brough, E. Yorks, and Mrs. Bröchner, 22, Minster Yard, Lincoln. She was at one time Matron of Queen Charlotte's Hospital, Marylebone Road, London, but for a number of years has been resident at Winchester as Superintendent of the Hants County Nursing Association.

Many Nurses in this and other countries will learn with great regret of the death at an advanced age (over ninety) of Miss Georgina B. Macvitie, S.R.N., F.B.C.N. Trained at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, in general nursing, she received her midwifery training at York Road Lying-in Hospital, Lambeth, and obtained the diploma of the London Obstetrical Society which was to stand her in good stead when later she held important positions in India. After holding various posts at home, including that of Night Superintendent at the London Fever Hospital, Islington, she proceeded to India where she was successively Matron of the Lahore Hospital, the Simla Hospital, the Ramsay Hospital, Naini, Tal. She also did private nursing in Calcutta and at home, and was Matron of St. Helen's Hospital, Lancashire. Miss Macvitie was a member of the League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses, the Matrons' Council of Great Britain, and the Royal British Nurses Association, and the British College of Nurses. During the years when the nurses were struggling for self government she was always quietly, unostentatiously, but firmly to be found supporting those leaders who were fighting to maintain the rights of the nurses. She took a keen interest in the National and International Councils of Nurses and with her friend Miss Clara Lee was to be seen at the Congresses in Berlin, Paris, London, Cologne, and at the International Congress on Tuberculosis at Rome in 1928.

Of late years she has been a patient in a convent in Rome, and her English friends have been kept in touch with her through Miss Dorothy Snell, Lady Superintendent of the "Scuola Convitto Regina Elena," Policlinico, Roma, who has been unceasing in her care of her.

Miss Snell writes: "I am writing to say that Miss Macvitie died early on Monday morning, March 13th. She had been more or less unconscious for weeks only rousing up occasionally. The kind Prior of S. Clemente, Fr. Rowan, O.P., visited her nearly every day, took her often Holy Communion and gave her the last Sacraments. Our Home Sister, Sister Pastorelli, with another nurse have been often to visit the patient and to perform certain nursing duties.

"She loved you, and when one got her on the subject of St. Bartholomew's, or you as Matron, her mind seemed quite clear.

"I went to her funeral—she had a beautifully sung Mass by the Dominicans—and also sent a beautiful wreath inscribed 'From the British College of Nurses,' and one of violets from myself."

Georgina Macvitie was a rare courageous, lovable soul, of serenity and charm, maintained to the end of a life beyond the span of most. R.I.P.

REVIEW.

LIFE OF THE VENERABLE LOUISE DE MARILLAC.*

This history and origin of the Sisters of Charity must be of absorbing interest to those members of the nursing profession who look upon their work as a vocation rather than as a business.

In the volume under our notice, by Alice Lady Lovat, we have set out the life of that truly great and good woman the M^{de}. Louise de Marillac, who was born at the close of the 16th century, and died at the age of sixty-eight, with the words on her lips—"Adieu, my Sisters, have great care of the service of the Poor."

Father Bernard Vaughan, in the preface to this work, strikes the note, which explains the attitude of Louise and her Sisters in their complete self abnegation in their various services to the sick and unfortunate, and the practical outcome of their religious fervour.

He says: "It is well to be reminded that religion is not a business transaction across a counter, with bill receipts and change given; but, on the contrary, it is a love affair between two friends."

It was the "love affair" which called into being the Sisters of Charity, a small company of village maidens who were the handmaids of the Ladies of Charity, when the latter were prevented from attending personally to the wants of the poor.

M. Vincent, afterwards canonised as "St. Vincent de Paul," was the director of M^{de}. Louise, and they appear to divide the honour between them of founding from humble beginnings the great society which at the present time numbers more than 30,000 Sisters at work in all parts of the globe.

Louise was the daughter of Louis Marillac, a member of the French parliament under Louis XIII. He bore the title of "Seigneur du Ferrières en Brie." She was brought up and educated at the royal monastery of St. Denis at Poissy. Her intellect was of a high order, and her father neglected no means of perfecting her in the exercise of mind and body.

At her father's death she wished to enter the cloister, but acting on the advice of her director, she believed that "God had other designs upon her," and married Antoine, le Gras, by whom she had one son.

Her married life did not appear to interfere with her work for the poor, as we read she was accustomed to take them sweet dishes, etc. She combed their hair, cleaning them from vermin and scab, and performed the last offices for the dead.

At thirty-four she was left a widow, and it was after this period that the nucleus of the Sisters of Charity was formed.

Early in the year 1634, a fresh field opened out for the Sisters of Charity; it was one which in the future they were to make peculiarly their own—that of hospital nursing. But as everything must have a beginning it was not as trained nurses, but as the humble helpers of the Ladies of Charity that they made their début.

It was in the Hôtel de Dieu where the nurses consisted of a community of nuns, in spite of whose efforts however a great deal remained to be done. At ordinary times the numbers were so great that it was found impossible to grapple with them, and when the plague, every third or fourth year, ravaged the country, the conditions appear to have been desperate.

In this state of affairs, Louise and other charitable women undertook to supplement the work of the nuns; but the visiting ladies opined that her Sisters, being simple peasant girls, would hardly be suitable, and that Parisians would do better, but very soon the Ladies discovered that their opinion had been too hastily formed

* Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., London.

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