

church, chapter, fratir and doctor, a lamb's wool pelisse, a coarse cloth shift, black lamb's wool headdresses and coarse black wool cloth veils." The lay Sisters had neither cowls nor scapulars, but in their stead "sheepskin cloaks and long hoods."

We have seen, from the Statutes of St. Mary's, Chichester, how solemnly the candidate was addressed by the Superior before entering. Dugdale shows how a man sought to enter a Benedictine monastery, and one may presume that the Sisters used a similar form:—

At the end of the year's novitiate, the novice approached once more the Superior in the presence of the Community, and begged to be allowed to make his profession:—

Novice: "Syr, I have beyn heyr now this twell month nere hand, and lovyde be God, me lyks ryght well, both the Order and the company; whereupon I besych you, and all the company of hevnyne that ye will resave me unto my profession at my twell month day according to my petycion whyche I made when I was first resaved heyr amongs you," etc.

The spiritual life, then, was the prime concern of these Sisters. But in following the Path of Perfection, in the imitation of Christ, the relieving of the sick was the physical complement to their spiritual exercises. It was undertaken for three reasons: first, because of the direct example of Christ Who "went about healing the sick," second, because of His promise of a celestial reward for those to whom it might be said "I was . . . sick, and ye ministered unto Me." "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of my brethren, ye did it unto Me," and, third, because, as in the teaching of the young, the nursing of the sick afforded a valuable opportunity for propounding Heavenly truths.

Nutting and Dock point out that "treatment, as we understand the term now, did not exist in the early days of the hospitals. They were houses where the poor and sick might resort, to be cared for by the Religious till it should please the Lord to heal them or relieve them according to His will." Rahere, the founder of St. Bartholomew's, Smithfield, vowed that "he would erect a hospital for the restoration of poor men and, as far as he could, would minister to the necessities of the poor gathered together in that place." The first patients are recorded, not because the cases were interesting from a medical point of view, but because the pious writer of the "Liber Fundacionis" regarded the cures as miraculous. Godena, the cripple, was one of these:—

"A certain woman named Godena had her legs so twisted back to her thighs that she could never stand upright, but by the continuous habit of sitting led a tedious life in sorrow and tears. She being brought on a time to the Church of the most blessed apostle (St. Bartholomew) begged the boon of perfect health, and obtained it by the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who looseth the fettered, raiseth the oppressed, and directeth the righteous."*

These early houses for the sick were kept in the very spirit of the Prophet: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." To nurses of a later day, such passive treatment seems amazingly callous, but it must be remembered that at the time when the "Liber Fundacionis" was written, at the end of the twelfth century, medical science was in its infancy.

By the beginning of the fifteenth century, however, the hospitals appear to have evolved into more complex institutions, with more servants to do the purely menial duties. The Sisters devoted themselves more to their patients, and their tasks became more specialised. The Prioress, who in the beginning had been the spiritual head of the nuns, assumed more responsibilities—her post corresponded more nearly to that of a modern matron. The main body of the Sisters devoted themselves to the

care of the sick, some probably becoming experienced midwives, having especial regard to those unfortunates "that have nysse done that ben with child"; some would have charge of the young children, for a great many of the Houses were also orphanages. It is recorded that in the year 1437 privileges were granted to St. Bartholomew's in consideration of their great charges in receiving the poor, feeble and infirm, keeping women in childbirth till their purification and sometimes feeding their infants till weaned. It was the custom of the Hospital if a mother died there in childbirth to keep the child till it was seven years old. Finally some of the Sisters became experienced herbalists, preparing lotions and applications from various herbs. They made ointments from their home-made lard by impregnating it with healing simples, and stored it in small earthenware pots. The effects, or reputed effects, of the various drugs became the common knowledge of those ladies who had charge of a household.

The office of Matron, or Prioress, with all its duties and responsibilities attendant upon the direction of a large establishment is, surprisingly, the one of which we have the most record. Even here, the records are purely indirect, being the accounts kept by these energetic women while they were in office. From them we learn not only the extent of the establishment under their care but their activities and organising capacity. Nothing further from Chaucer's slightly precious Prioress, who "wept when she saugh a mouse" could be imagined. These women were the true precursors of Florence Nightingale.

(Two examples are then given, the first being a Prioress at St. Leonard's Hospital, York, the second being mentioned by name, the Prioress of the Benedictine Leper Women's Hospital, called St. Mary de Pree.)

This, then, was the type of our early predecessors. Whether the strain deteriorated or not we cannot say. Isolated examples of immorality exposed joyfully by Henry VIII.'s Visitors, carry very little weight with modern historians. One thing is certain, the efficiency of the Hospitals was impaired before the Dissolution, mainly on account of their diminished revenues.

But the secular nurses who replaced the Religious were a distinct retrogression in the evolution of Nursing service. It is only since the advent of Florence Nightingale that any attempt has been made to come up to the standard of these early nursing Sisters. Their importance must not be under-estimated. Taking into consideration the comparative evolution of medical service, they serve as a measure by which we can gauge our own attainments. And study of their life and times is interesting in itself because there hangs a quaint and lovely fragrance about them:

"Whither is fled the visionary gleam?

Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"

RED CROSS DAY.

CELEBRATING FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE'S BIRTHDAY.

May 12th, the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birthday, is to be celebrated on a much more elaborate scale this year by the British Red Cross Society.

Permission has already been granted for the holding of a Flag Day throughout the Metropolitan Police Area, and all the Mayors and Chairmen of Urban and Rural District Councils in the district are being asked to cooperate with the organizers to make the Day a success.

As well as arranging street collections on the Day, Red Cross branches are this year organizing displays of their peace-time work, in order to stimulate interest in it and to increase their membership.

Over £10,000 was raised last year as the result of Red Cross Day collections and appeals in England and Wales.

*From "The Book of the Foundation of the Church of St. Bartholomew." Translated into modern English by A. E. Webb.

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