

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF HOSPITAL SUPERINTENDENTS.*

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THE agreeable task of presenting a few observations at this inaugural meeting of the hospital superintendents of Ontario was accepted only as an opportunity of furnishing evidence of sincere sympathy with the formation of such an association in this Province.

It would seem needless to dwell upon the good work which such an association may accomplish. The duties and responsibilities of a hospital superintendent are such that probably no class of people can derive more benefit from occasionally meeting together and discussing the many and varied problems that so often arise to perplex those engaged in institutional management. Co-operation is the key-note to success and with the right spirit infused in such an organization as the one you are to-day forming, beneficial results must follow. It is always an inspiration for those engaged in similar duties to meet together. The daily routine with its wearisome details tends to blight originality, alertness, motive and enthusiasm. Nothing is so deadly as getting into a rut. Who does not need inspiration and new ideas?

The honor of founding the first hospital is usually ascribed to Fabiola, a friend of Saint Jerome, a Christian lady of Rome in the fourth century. We read that this Roman daughter of consuls and dictators sold all her goods, dressed the wounds of the maimed and wretched, and carried the sufferers on her own shoulders. Lecky, the rationalist historian, says of this charity that "planted by a woman's hand, it overspread the world, alleviating to the end of time the darkest anguish of humanity." But before this, similar institutions had been begun in the East, by Basil in Cæsarea, Saint Ephraem in Edessa, and by Presbyter Brassianus in Ephesus. Speaking of Basil's work, Gregory of Nazianzus said: "We have no longer to witness the fearful and pitiable sight of men like corpses before death, with the greater part of their limbs dead, driven from cities, dwellings, from public places and from watercourses. Basil it was who, more than any other, persuaded those who are men not to scorn men nor to dishonor Christ, the head of all, by their inhumanity toward human beings." From the East the impulse and direction came which, in the picturesque language of Saint Jerome, "transplanted this twig from the terebinth of Abraham to the Austonian shore." But, whether Fabiola was the first builder of hospitals or not, her name suggests the wonderful part which woman has had in Christian charity ever since. We are told that Placilla, the wife of Theodosius, the Em-

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