

or Register in connection with the Central Sick Club or Benevolent Fund? With a system of intercommunication throughout the Hospital world, and the co-operation of all Matrons, officials, and others interested in Nurses, much might be done to find employment suitable for individual need. A Nurse desirous of placing her name on such a Register should state, on printed forms supplied for the purpose, her name, age, means of subsistence (if any), nature of chronic complaint, the kind of work required, and furnish at the same time two recent testimonials from a Matron and Doctor. It would be difficult to estimate all the advantages to Nurses that might originate in a successful system of intercommunication, when a little timely help might be the means of lasting good, and the want of it, when the Nurse, through ill-health, is *hors de combat*, is equivalent to the loss of daily bread, to say nothing of the proverbial cheese. Many a breakdown might be averted. For instance, the Nurse with a weak chest, whose work lies north, might be exchanged to some Hospital further south, or even abroad; the sickly town Nurse might be drafted on to a country or Children's Hospital, especially if her experience of Hospital work warranted the effort to retain her in her profession.

Our last class (C), of chronic invalids, at first sight seem to require no assistance either from the Benevolent Fund or its branch, the Record or Register, seeing they have relatives to lean upon; but when we consider the lonely life of an invalid, how the daily suffering has to be borne, whether the daily meed of sympathy is there or not, shut out from all active employment, shut in to days of wearying unrest, to a life whose dull monotony is varied only by moments of keener pain—then, perhaps, a visit to our homes of rest might come as a welcome pleasure, and prove a veritable gleam of sunshine in their gloomy sky.

And now we come to the "last scene of all"—the Nurse incapacitated by old age; and our greatest difficulty lies in the question, at what age is she to be called old, or rather at what period of her life may she be entitled to the privileges of old age? I am under the impression that the majority of Nurses are worn out much sooner than most women. Is it that—

"They live in deeds, not years;  
In feelings, not in figures on a dial;  
And count time by heart-throbs"?

Some Nurses are old, that is infirm, at forty-five; others, on the contrary, are brisk and cheery at seventy-five, though I grant these last are in the minority. Some time ago I visited a great number of Hospitals and Infirmarys, and I was struck with the youthful appearance of most of the

"Sisters" and "Charges," and one naturally wonders if there are any old Nurses, and, if so, where are they?

We have no very pleasing analogy in nature to fall back upon. Darwin, in his minute investigations into the habits of bees, tells us a pitiful story of how, one day, whilst he was watching a busy hive, he saw a very old bee, laden with pollen, painfully winging its way home. Suddenly it fell, apparently exhausted, but after a short interval it arose, and to his astonishment flew from the hive, never to return, and thus in loneliness and uselessness died; and we know from trustworthy authorities it is no uncommon thing for the feeble and aged in the lower animals to be destroyed by those younger and more vigorously constituted. It is ever thus: the weak to the wall, the weak to the wall!

A Nurse is generally looked upon as old when she no longer keeps pace with the times, is no longer up to the latest improvements in Medical and Surgical Nursing, and as a consequence is gradually, but surely, pushed out of the ranks by the younger, and perhaps more highly Trained, Nurse. At this juncture what is to become of her? What has been her fate heretofore? Work, work, work, until exhausted nature can endure it no longer; a final spurt to sustain life by needlework, or some other unremunerative employment; when that fails, the Workhouse, or the charity of strangers, and then—

"O grave where is thy victory?  
O death where is thy sting?"

I feel confident that if once

#### HOMES FOR NURSES

were erected, it would solve the difficulty, meet a long-felt want, an urgent need. I do firmly hold that the majority of Nurses should contribute towards these Homes, either by weekly subscriptions, or by contributing a fixed sum when they come into residence; but, on the other hand, I am not blind to the fact that there are Nurses who are widows, and have supported children all their lives, and others who have been the only prop, so to speak, for some brother, or sister, or relative to lean upon; and their dutiful but unselfish conduct has left them destitute at a period when they most need help and support, so that to meet such cases, and afford help to everyone, some Homes should certainly be quite free. Those Nurses who have worked in public institutions all their lives feel the effects severely between the ages of fifty and sixty, and I am of opinion that length of service should give a candidate a prior claim to such assistance.

To attempt any description of plans for these Homes is quite beyond the scope of this essay. It would be of little importance in point of com-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)