

ardent love of knowledge, united to almost superhuman determination and energy, I have visited *incognito* some of the District Nursing Institutions of almost every county in England in the days gone by; meanwhile silently taking notes of the progress of this highly philanthropic movement from its earliest infancy. Indeed, Mr. Editor, I well remember the time when it was said of District Nursing, "It will never go;" and I also distinctly recollect the keen opposition that it originally received from certain members of the Medical profession—not yet quite extinct—likewise the intense wonderment it evoked from a vast majority of the lay public and the hampered public press of those days. Even whilst I am writing this my memory recurs to a touchingly pathetic picture which met my view in the early spring of 1865—viz., a bundle of rags which I found in my wanderings, lying upon a pallet of straw in a garret of one of our large towns. Upon further investigation this bundle turned out to be the live and emaciated form of a fallen sister, whose only visitors for some weeks previously had been rats and mice. But hereon I will not linger. Suffice it, practically I have been a District Nurse from that day to this.

Thank God! the scene has changed slightly since then, and much has already been done, but there remains still much to be done. And were we individually fully alive to our responsibility in this matter, to the realisation of the great world-wide missionary enterprise which underlieth a thoroughly judicious and efficient discharge of the duties of this vast and open field—white already unto harvest—I believe that we should not allow ourselves any respite from the call of duty until such time as we had seen every solitary District Nurse comfortably installed in a proper District Nursing cottage, wherever practicable. Do not the hands of these women need sustaining and holding up?

Again, my own experience and practical knowledge of the workings of this scheme are such as to warrant me in emphatically asserting that wherever this plan has been adopted, and fairly and impartially tried, it has been invariably found to be a very marked improvement upon lodgings. I repeat, we are giving our Nurses little or no control over their districts so long as we keep them hampered in lodgings. Imagine, for instance, a Nurse's chattels being overhauled by the attendants during her absence, and the Nurse herself meeting a full detailed account of the contents of her shelves in some remote part of her district unawares, sometimes to their astonishment being met by the committee too, and you will see what I mean. For, as I have aforesaid, the active opponents of our District Nurses are not yet quite extinct; but is this a sufficiently strong reason to warrant a toleration of their overthrow time after time? Surely all our solitary District Nurses cannot be wrong!

Once more, whilst sympathising fully with all those committees who seem to have been unfortunate in the choice of their women, my very warmest sympathies go out after that "right honourable" army of District Nurses which has so nobly borne the brunt of the fight in the days of yore. And need I reassure you that I speak advisedly hereon, and also write feelingly, having myself been deputed to again and again act as one of the executors in the last will and testament of Nurses who have succumbed in the terrible contest for *justice* during the last twenty-five years?

But let me give you a case in point, which came under my notice only so recently as 1889. A District Nurse of many years' standing, and one who holds the highest testimonials as to her professional abilities and moral character, has placed in my hands an original and official notice, a copy of which I will herewith give you verbatim, withholding the date and the name of the association by whom it was issued. You will understand that this remarkable missive was found unawares by the Nurse on her return home that evening, in her letter box; and that this is, to the very best of my belief, the kind of treatment received from this particular Institute by every Nurse it hath employed during the last fifteen years. Listen!

"Dear Madam,—I regret to have to inform you that the committee of the — Nursing Association have decided this evening to close their engagement with you, the same to cease on —. Please to consider this notice thereof." By the way, more food for the party opposing the Registration of Nurses!

I have little more to add beyond saying that, although naturally of a somewhat shy and retiring disposition, I have long felt that I must not altogether hold my peace at such a time as this. In the case just mentioned I am in a position to state, without hesitation, that it hath repeatedly been said, "Towards — and its suffering poor no Nurse has been and done like she." What, is it possible to become *too popular*? As in such a dilemma, committees, Doctors and Nurses alike must in all fairness acknowledge themselves non-plussed.

In conclusion, I am in honour bound to tell you, Sir, that after some years of earnest, faithful and loving service among the suffering poor of the place, having spared neither time, pains, labour nor money to make her work a success, I found this poor Nurse suddenly cut adrift and left starving. Truly, fact is still stranger than fiction. This, then, and similar cases that I have met in my wanderings, leads me to the inquiry, "Who is responsible for these things?" Of course, the Medical profession, supported by the clerical, hold the reins of management here. And this last sentence ushers in my final query—viz., Do the very onerous duties of these men leave them a sufficient margin of spare time to deal out an even-handed justice to our solitary District Nurses? That any Doctor, subscribing a guinea annually to the funds, should find himself in a position now-a-days to attend these yearly meetings, and there to stand up and deliver himself thus: "If you do not let me have my way I will throw the whole thing over," is, it seems to me, a noteworthy paradox. However, I am glad to notice that at Southampton they appear to be the fortunate possessors of a good, competent and appreciative financial committee of ladies as sole managers of this District Nursing enterprise.

Thanking you in anticipation,—I am, dear Sir, yours faithfully,
AN EYE-WITNESS.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

Sir,—Will you kindly tell me what is the fair average sum to allow to each patient for food per week in a Convalescent Home for Women (eighty beds), where I am required by the committee to give the following diet:—Breakfast—tea, coffee and cocoa, bread and bacon, bread and butter, eggs once a week; dinner—butchers' meat daily (when cold, with fish in addition), milk puddings every day, with plum puddings, suet puddings, or fruit tarts twice in the week, second helping of meat and puddings always allowed, and milk to drink; tea—with bread and butter; supper—bread and cheese, porridge, bread and milk, broth, bread and butter, and choice of porter or milk to drink?

I shall be much obliged if you will reply in the *Nursing Record*.—I am, Sir, yours truly,
MATRON, M.B.N.A.

[The average cost will largely depend on the average numbers which have to be provided for. The greater the number the less will be the average cost per head. Approximately, for fifty to eighty people we should estimate the cost of the above dietary at from 6s. 6d. to 8s. 6d. per head per week.—ED.]

REPLIES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Leila.—You do not give proper name and address. It is against our rules, however pleasing the subject of the letter, to insert such without we know from whom the communication is received. We should not, of course, publish the name and address.

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