

The Nursing Record "At Homes."

NO I.

MISS BREAY AT THE METROPOLITAN HOSPITAL.

THE hot July sunshine is shining down in almost merciless force on the long unsheltered expanse of the Kingsland Road, and it is positively a relief to find oneself inside the Metropolitan Hospital, which stands in the midst of those populous districts—Shoreditch, Haggerston, Hackney, Dalston, and the lower portion of Islington. I am shown into the Sister Superior's room, and await with much expectation the arrival of Miss Breay. The room is small and very barely furnished; a cat who looks as though it were a fit inmate for a hospital is purring on the window-ledge. An *écritoire* with all the drawers and cupboards thrown open proclaimed the many secretarial duties of this busy lady. A small book-case is filled with Kingsley's novels and many works relative to the world of suffering and of help, but Miss Breay, when she comes in, tells me she has not much leisure for reading. She is very diffident about herself, and tells me she would much prefer to give facts connected with the Hospital itself.

"You know," she said, "I am only really put in here by Sister Dorothea, who has the management of St. John's House, Norfolk Street, and of the Maternity Home at Battersea, and we are all in connection with the All Saints' Sisters."

"How long have you been here?" I ventured to ask.

"Since January, 1889, but I was first only in charge of a Ward, then for two years I went to take the management of the Maternity Home at Battersea. I have virtually only been here since last October as Matron."

"May I ask you where you trained for your profession?"

"I was three years at St. Bartholomew's, and before then I had no experience of Nursing beyond that which an ordinary woman gains in her early home life. I always liked the idea of Hospital work, indeed, I think every woman should, who enters upon the profession."

We then talked about the proposed Charter for Nurses, and I elicited from Miss Breay, that she was very much in favour of the scheme of Registration.

"Without it, you see, almost anyone has a right to

style themselves Professional Nurses; supposing any girl goes into a Hospital as Probationer, and only remains three months in it, she has only gained a minimum of experience, and yet she may go out into the world as a qualified member of the profession. The Register will render all this impossible, and will thus dually serve the interests of the public at large and of the Nurses themselves."

Miss Breay is of about middle height and dressed in the regulation costume of the All Saints' Sisters—the blue and white striped linen dress, a large white linen apron, and white frilled cap. I ask her to tell me her ordinary day's routine, but she says this is very difficult to do, as the work varies from day to day.

"We always breakfast at a quarter to eight, and during the morning I go round the wards and attend to any duties that come under my province. I dine in the middle of the day with the Nurses, and in the afternoon I receive visitors and see business people. Several times in the week I attend the operating theatre, that is, if there are any operations taking place."

Just at that moment a Sister knocks at the door, and says, "If you please Matron, the theatre will be wanted this afternoon."

"As a rule, Friday is a favourite day for operations."

Presently Miss Breay takes me to see the out-patients' department, of which she is very justly proud. This is one of the few Hospitals where the Provident Department is in vogue, and every patient who visits the Hospital between the hours of 9 a.m. and 12 noon, 7.30 and 8.30 p.m., is seen by the Doctor on duty, gets a prescription and medicine for seven days free. Miss Breay is evidently known to many of these out-patients, and she goes up to one woman holding a frail little boy in her arms who had been a inmate of the Hospital for six months.

"Little Jimmie," she says, taking the child in her arms, "is very badly burnt, and I am afraid he is not quite cured yet."

"Ay, and I doubt he never will be," adds the weary-looking mother. "He many a time cries to come back to the Hospital."

Miss Breay is here called away to attend a Board Meeting, so I make my adieux to her and to the Metropolitan Hospital.

L. A. S.



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