The Nursing Record "At Homes."

No. 6.

MISS DE PLEDGE AT THE CHELSEA INFIRMARY.

SO much has been written from time to time, and, no doubt, in some cases, justly, about the tyrannies and hardships of Rate supported charities, that I confess it was with a feeling of dread that I rang the bell at the gate of the Chelsea Infirmary one afternoon last week. The feeling, however, proved to be very transitory, for no sooner had I entered the door than my eye was struck by the pretty fresh colouring of the walls. Not cold grey stone, but softly blending shades of green that suggested springtime and new life, and a sense of restfulness. The porter opened a door at the head of the stairs, and I found myself in the brightest, cosiest of sanctums, shaking hands with Miss DE PLEDGE, the Matron of the Infirmary, by whose kind permission I had come to learn a little about it, and her work there.

At the first glance, I knew that I stood in the presence of a woman of broad, enlightened views and wide sympathies, and it was not difficult to understand how popular she would be alike with the Governing body, Nurses, and Patients. In answer to my request for information, Miss DE PLEDGE told me that she had been trained as a Nurse at St. Bartholomew's Hospital during Mrs. BEDFORD FENWICK'S Matronship there, and that she attached the highest value to the training she had received from her.

"I suppose you approve of the Royal British Nurses' Association?" I said.

"Most decidedly. We all belong to it here, and I am on the Executive Committee as one of the representatives of Poor Law Infirmaries."

"Do you train Nurses here?"

"Yes. The training consists of three years' work in the Infirmary, during which time they attend lectures from the doctor on elementary anatomy and physiology, and from myself on nursing. I think deportment and good manners most essential in a Nurse, and this is a subject to which I always draw particular attention in my introductory lecture."

I asked Miss DE PLEDGE if she found that any one class of women made better Nurses than another.

"I should say that a good Nurse depended more on character than on class The only difficulty I have ever met with is indifference. A Nurse ought to work from too high a standard to consider anything beneath her, and I generally find when this is represented to Probationers, they come to look upon their work in the right light."

"You remind me of George Herbert's lines:—

'A servant with this Clause
Makes drudgery Divine,
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws;
Makes that and the action fine.'"

"I suppose you have the selection of your Nurses?"

"Yes, and those I consider suitable I recommend to the Board for appointment. They are very particular and insist on having the very best it is possible to get. We have a great number of applications, many more than it is possible to accept, but we hope soon to have a Nurses' Home in connection with our Infirmary, which will enable us to take more."

"How many have you at present on your staff?"

"Thirty-four Nurses, a Hospital-trained Night Superintendent, and a trained Assistant Matron. I think it is of the greatest importance to make the Nurses comfortable, and to see that they have sufficient and appetising food. I frequently go down to the kitchen to satisfy myself that their meals are being properly served."

"Do you think a Nurse's life a very hard one?"

"I think it is one that involves an immense strain on all the powers—mental, physical, and sympathetic. Then the atmosphere of a sick-room is not healthy—the heated air and the infected breath of the patient—all these conditions are naturally not so health giving as plenty of out-door exercise and fresh breezes."

Just then our conversation was interrupted by

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