

It may be observed, also, that guardians will rarely obtain the full value of their paid Nurses so long as there remains opportunity or excuse for these officers to delegate their duties to inmates.

Humanity and economy alike dictate that the sick poor in Workhouse wards should receive Nursing treatment not less efficient than that which is now afforded in general Hospitals, and in well-administered cottage Hospitals.

In Workhouses, where pauper Nursing is dispensed with, it is usually found that the proportion of paid Nurses and assistant Nurses to the average number of occupied sick beds should be from about one to fifteen to one to ten, this allowance including night Nurses off duty.

The actual provision must largely depend on the size of the infirmary, and the character of the cases, but it should be remembered that, although the sick are mostly chronic, a large number are of such kind as to require constant care and attention.

In some Unions the practice of employing as paid "scrubbers" widows, who would otherwise be chargeable to the rates, has been successful.

In the larger Workhouses the Nurses should be under the direct control of a trained and experienced Superintendent, or Head Nurse, subject to the directions of the Medical Officer in all matters of treatment, and of the Master and Matron, so far as the orders of the Local Government Board may require, in regard to discipline. In Workhouse Infirmaries, under separate administration, the Matron should herself be a Trained Nurse, and have charge of the Nursing staff.

It is very essential that due provision should be made for efficient Nursing by night. This, above all, is a time when the sick wards should be watched by responsible officers; it is a period of much trial to the sick.

Attention to the warmth and ventilation of the wards, and to the administration of medicine, stimulants, or food, the application of poultices, management of the natural wants of the feeble and paralytic, and care for those in pain, or dying, are all duties which should be confided to none but responsible Nurses. Want of proper assistance to "wet" cases at night time not only greatly increases the work for the Nurse but is one great cause of bedsores and suffering.

When arrangements are duly made for paid night Nursing, the day Nurses ought to be enabled to obtain undisturbed rest from the immediate vicinity of the sick wards.

In their circular letter the Poor Law Board further expressed their opinion "that where the arrangements of the Workhouse will permit, it is very desirable that special accommodation should be provided for the Nurse and the paid assistants, so that they may be always ready to attend upon the patients, and be removed as much as possible from the distraction which the proceedings in a large Workhouse are calculated to produce."

In some of the smaller Workhouses this provision may be made on a separate floor of the Infirmary, or frequently some other portion of the Workhouse may be adapted for the purpose. In the largest Workhouses it may be requisite to furnish a detached Nurses' Home. In either case the cost would be largely counterbalanced by the value of increased sick ward accommodation consequent on the removal of wards-people.

Many advantages have been found to follow the establishment of Nursing on the lines above indicated. Not Nursing alone, but Medical attendance is increased

in efficiency, and experience shows that, with improved treatment, speedier cure and lessened stay of curable cases may be looked for.

One of the chief duties of a skilled Nurse is to watch the dietaries, and by her reports to enable the Medical Officer to prescribe for each patient such food as may be suitable and acceptable, so that waste shall sink to a minimum. Few, perhaps, realise how large an economy and how much increase of comfort to the sick may thus be effected.

It will be generally admitted that the sick poor can usually be better tended and nursed by skilled Nurses in well-equipped sick wards than in their own homes; and the regularity, neatness, and order of the wards tend to diminish the repugnance to entering the Workhouse which is often evinced by the sick poor of the better class when reduced to want by failing health.

Frequently wards of indifferent construction may be much improved in wholesomeness by the care of a well-instructed Nurse.

Nursing, while demanding special personal qualifications, must, like every business, be learned; and by establishing a well-considered system of Nursing, the guardians of a large Workhouse may, in due course, train their own Nurses, and assist in supplying a demand which is certain to increase.

In balance-sheet form, the financial side of the question would stand somewhat thus:—

Salaries.	Efficiency.
Uniforms.	Saving in waste.
Rations.	Saving in wear of appliances.
Quarters.	Detection of malingering.
	Curable cases more quickly fit for discharge.
	Increased sick ward accommodation.
	Training of Probationers.

The diminution of suffering consequent on skilled Nursing is a gain which cannot be expressed.

One important point remains. Much evil frequently results from the continuance in office of Nurses long incapacitated by ill-health or advancing years.

It is obviously very desirable to guard against this, by enabling Nurses to retire when they are no longer able to discharge their duties with efficiency. The guardians are aware of the powers which they possess as regards granting superannuation allowances, and attention may be especially directed to the facilities which are now afforded to Nurses for making provision against sickness and old age.

(Signed) ARTHUR DOWNES, M. D.

Local Government Board,
April, 1893.

Inspector.

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