

etc., can practise their trades. This is not so in Nursing, which, as it deals with the lives of patients, is second only in importance to the medical profession. A woman calling herself a trained Nurse, and holding a certificate of training from a Hospital, may have had one, two, or three years' training; her efficiency may have been tested by one, or two, examinations, or not tested at all. She may, during her term of training, have been systematically taught by the Medical Officers, the Matron, and the Sisters; or she may have been allowed to pick up what little knowledge of Nursing she could, under the idea, apparently, that Nursing comes by grace and opportunity, not by hard study, and a close and intelligent attention to a difficult and arduous work. In one Hospital, in Scotland, a preliminary examination must be passed before the practical work of two years' training can be begun. In some London Hospitals, Nurses are considered qualified to become "Sisters" after one year's training, or even less, if they show what is thought by the Matron to be a certain aptitude for the work. In some Hospitals, even yet, the payment of a fee of 52 guineas takes the place of training, intelligence, and experience. Thus we find that, in one Hospital, one class of Probationers who pay that sum, can be what is called "trained," in one year; while there is another class who pay no fee, and require three years' training, and are supposed to be "only Nurses"; while the "guineas," as they are often called, are considered fit for the higher posts of Sisters, Night Superintendents, and Matrons.

The Royal British Nurses' Association is doing what it can to put an end to this state of things, and to bring about some uniformity as to the standard of work. It has stamped the three years' term as the minimum length of time required for the training of Nurses in general nursing, and in doing this, it is supported by the recommendation of the Lords' Select Committee at the close of its long and exhaustive inquiry.

For this, if for no other cause, the Royal British Nurses' Association is worthy the loyal and hearty support of all intelligent Nurses who have the well-being and progress of their profession at heart.

I have shown, I think, that decided action on this matter is needed; but it would be difficult to get this at once, as the authorities of some Nursing Schools are so much at variance on the subject, and apparently so unwilling to accept suggestions. But a free discussion would facilitate matters greatly, and help much towards a speedy and clear elucidation of this knotty but important point.

ISLA STEWART,  
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Superintendent of Nursing of St.  
Bartholomew's Hospital.*

We commend Miss Stewart's most valuable suggestion to the notice of Matrons of Hospitals throughout the country. We would suggest that the important questions to which Miss Stewart alludes should be taken up one by one; and that, to commence with, opinions should be given as to the term of Hospital work requisite before a Nurse should be considered thoroughly trained, and the best manner in which the specified time should be occupied. If some general agreement of opinion could be reached on these points, the question of examinations would more easily be solved.—ED.

## Our Indian Letter.

### A MILITARY HOSPITAL IN THE HOT WEATHER.

By the end of September we are just beginning to breathe again in the plains of the Punjab. The burning, fiery, intense heat is nearly over; the rains are also past, together with the muggy, damp heat which accompanies them. The days are still hot, it is true, and the sun is still too cruel a tyrant to be willingly faced, but the nights begin to be almost cool and pleasant, and at any rate afford one a blessed relief from the gasping condition in which one has existed for the last five or six months.

Nowadays that travelling is so easy, it has become a recognised thing that everyone who can get away, should spend their summer in the hills. Most of the English troops are sent into camp on the lovely forest-covered slopes of the lower Himalayas, and from several stations the Nursing Sisters are also sent up with them, and continue their work from April to October in a pleasant climate, seven or eight thousand feet above the oven-like plains.

On the other hand, in some of the large stations, such as Rawal Pindi, Meerut, Lucknow, and others, a considerable number of troops are left all through the year, and there is often a great deal of sickness during the hot months, and plenty of work in hospital.

Imagine a long, narrow, one-storied building, surrounded by deep verandahs, which forms one wing of the hospital. Outside, there is blinding glare and pitiless scorching heat. Inside, darkness and (comparatively) coolness. Every door and window is kept strictly closed from sunrise to sunset; the doors are never opened except when the hot wind blows, and then the open doorways are filled up with closely-fitting thick mats of khas-khas grass, called "tatties," which are kept wet by troops of little boys perpetually throwing water over them, and the very rapid evaporation transforms the oven-like blast into a cool, damp air as it blows through, and pervades the place with a pungent sweet smell. In spite of all precautions, however, it is difficult to keep the temperature of the ward much below 100, and I have known it 104 for days together.

A small punkah hangs over every bed; these punkahs are attached to a large heavy frame which swings from the rafters, and this is pulled sleepily to and fro, day and night, by a half-naked cooli who squats on his haunches in the very middle of the floor. The medical officers arrive in hospital by 6 in the morning. They are accompanied in their tour of the wards by an apothecary who enters all orders and prescriptions in his book, and by a number of native ward servants; some of these are ready to run messages; while one man carries pen and ink, a "bhisti" or water-carrier has a basin, towel, and soap; while one "sweeper" carries a bowl in which to put any soiled dressings there may be, and perhaps another dances attendance with spittoons for inspection. These sweepers are men

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