

the sick ; but to make its machinery of use to the sick poor, two things are necessary: the first, that the pauper badge should not be insisted on in the case of the temporary patient, a difficulty that might be met by allowing him to contribute towards his own maintenance, and permitting him to wear his own clothing, provided it was decent; the second, that, through the agency of the Poor Law, the sick poor should be nursed in their own homes, either by a staff of Nurses lodged in suitable localities, or by a staff of Nurses residing in the Workhouse, and with means of conveyance and communication with the outlying districts. To this suggestion we would add an efficient transport service to the Workhouse, to take the place of the amateur conveyances for the sick at present at the service of the Relieving Officer. Speedy and efficient medical relief—that is, the prompt attendance of the doctor, supplemented by skilled Nursing—may in the end save the rates from being charged with the permanent support of a man and his children.

#### AGED AND INFIRM.

But whilst thus pleading the cause of the sick, we would not forget the aged and infirm, in whose condition there is room for much improvement. In the first place, we would ask that the attendance might be improved. The reports show that they are left to the tender mercies of one of the inmates, perhaps only one remove from a condition of helplessness; and at night it is hardly possible to conceive of the misery and wretchedness that this entails on the inmates who have no means of making their case known. The system is provocative of blackmailing, and that such an abuse exists is known to every Poor Law official, and it will continue until properly-qualified attendants, not necessarily trained Nurses, are appointed to care for the aged and infirm. We are glad to see that private philanthropy is alive to the necessities of this class, and, by means of an Association, is selecting and training suitable women for this work, who are called Workhouse attendants.

#### CUSTODY OF OFFENSIVE PATIENTS.

We also venture to draw your attention to the sad condition of the old men or women who are placed apart on account of their infirmities. To the inevitable humiliation of their lot is added the harsh treatment to which they are so often subjected in being herded together in some dark back ward or outhouse, under the care of paupers, treated as outcasts and denied the skilled Nursing which in their case is absolutely necessary to their condition.

#### CONDITION OF BUILDINGS.

To pass from Nursing of the inmates to the equipment of the buildings, it has been shown that the sick quarters are in many instances most unsuitable for the treatment of the sick, and these houses have in several instances been condemned by your Inspectors; and yet, in spite of official condemnation, they still stand to bar the way to progress in an enlightened management of the sick. In this matter we feel sure that public opinion would be in favour of strengthening the

hands of the department by such enactments as would compel the erection of suitable buildings; that such powers would be in the interest of the ratepayer there can be no question, as it would lead to real economy in the end. We have but to refer you to the reports on the Bath and Plymouth Workhouses to illustrate how impossible it is for the treatment and Nursing of the patients to be carried on in buildings where there is no supply of hot or cold water, no sanitary appliances, in the Hospital sense of the term, no wards for the sick which admit of economy in the working staff, or of complete supervision by the responsible head.

#### INSPECTION.

We have incidentally referred to weakness in this department, and the inspectors have our full sympathy in the apparent hopelessness of the task of carrying through reforms in the teeth of inveterate local prejudices. To strengthen this branch of the service we would suggest that the appointment of inspector should be given to those men or women who have by training and experience the qualities necessary for the work; added to this, that the recommendations they make should, after due inquiry, be enforced on the local authorities, and that for the special departments of the service, such as the medical and the nursing branches, special inspectors be appointed.

This most excellent memorandum is under consideration at the Poor Law Board, and we hope that it will lead to a speedy and effective reformation in the terrible conditions under which the sick in so many of our Workhouse Infirmaries are being "Nursed."

## Our American Letter.

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.

THE general interest of the Nursing world in Nursing affairs has never been more animated, more pervasive than at present, as the autumn brings back wanderers, and the wheels of work are oiled and rubbed preparatory to winding up and starting everywhere the steady rush of winter.

The latest event of interest has been the Convention of Nurses which met at Manhattan Beach Hotel to plan a comprehensive organisation among graduate Nurses. While this Convention was called by the Society of Superintendents of Training Schools, yet its whole plan and purpose depend on the Alumnae Associations, representing the strongest element among graduate Nurses at large; and unless they respond favourably little can be expected, for the heads of Training Schools—their work of starting the ball rolling once done—will play none save individual parts in a National Association of Nurses framed on the usual lines of individual effort and majority government. It was, therefore, very satisfactory to learn that all of the Alumnae Associations written to, answered with great interest and cordiality, and chose their most representative women as delegates.

Much of the talk one hears shows how seriously the event was looked upon. The Farrand Training School Alumnae met in full force, and considered *pro* and *con* the various possibilities of a National Association of Nurses: what it should represent; what it should undertake; what it should not attempt. Doubtless

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 Grown in our own British Colony of Ceylon.

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