

Districts for the better treatment of sick poor is anything but novel, and has been adopted by the Local Government Board for various purposes and on many occasions.

In bricks and mortar alone Mr. Humphreys' suggestion would mean the expenditure of some millions, and the ratepayers would have a good deal to say upon that matter, whilst the difficulties of transport and the distance of the infirmary from the patient's friends are very formidable obstacles. The friends of country pauper patients have very few shillings to spend in railway fares.

But the main point, of which Mr. Humphreys is probably unaware, is the absence of material, suitable for the training of probationer nurses,

The acutely sick are but rarely present in the country infirmaries, whilst surgical cases are unknown, and it would be a fraud upon nursing aspirants and upon the public, if such institutions were to attempt to train nurses.

The principal duties of a country workhouse nurse are to feed and to keep clean infirm or helpless persons, and whilst admitting the desirability, I question the necessity of highly trained women to perform this work.

The remaining points in the letter were fully discussed in my address on "The State Registration of Nurses," delivered before the Matrons' Council at the annual meeting last year.

I wish, however, to repeat that workhouse Masters and Matrons, by their training, are quite unfitted to have control of the sick wards, and so long as they are recruited from the ranks of porters and labour mistresses, so long will they be incapable of wisely governing persons of a better social position, and of sympathetically ministering to the wants of the sick.

The sick wards in every case should be under the sole control of the medical officer, with a responsible superintendent nurse acting under him, and the only duty of the master and matron should be to carry out the orders and requisitions of these officers. They should have absolutely no control over the nursing staff. At the same time nurses who accept posts under the present conditions should remember that they are bound to obey the lawful orders of the master and matron. If the conditions are irksome the office should be resigned, but disapproval of a system does not warrant disobedience, nor does it condone insubordination. I think the affairs of a certain nursing association would be more flourishing had it inculcated these principles into its one year trained nurses, instead of making spies and rebels of them whilst telling them they were pioneers and missionaries in a great and good movement.

The needed reform can and will be effected by constitutional methods.

The salaries offered by Boards of Guardians are not likely to tempt trained nurses to remain long in their service, but this is merely a question of demand and supply.

The suggestion that there should be a separate and presumably lower examination standard for Poor Law nurses as a whole we emphatically reject. The larger infirmaries can and do train their nurses as thoroughly and as fully as any of the hospitals.

My opinion is that with adequate salaries and proper government there would be no lack of good nurses

even in our smaller infirmaries.

I am, Madam,
Yours faithfully.

F. S. TOOGOOD, M.D.,
Medical Superintendent.

Lewisham Infirmary, S.E.

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—I have been greatly interested by your report of the deputation of the Workhouse Infirmary Association to the President of the Local Government Board, and I should be glad to hear whether anything is being done on similar lines in Scotland, where for so long we have boasted of leading the van in matters relating to Poor Law administration. I have for twenty years been a constant visitor at a small poorhouse—a poorhouse too small to claim the trained nurse whose employment is "suggested" by the Scottish Local Government Board, and where the so-called "nursing" is done entirely by paupers, very frequently by imbecile paupers. During that time I have seen severe cases of cancer, bronchitis, &c., and constant cases of consumption, sores of various kinds, heart disease, epilepsy, paralysis, and so on. Many of these cases must have required constant attention, not to speak of night nursing, and the attention given by a fellow pauper may be better imagined than described. Besides the above, there are, of course, constant midwifery cases, and the Medical Officer, I may mention, resides a considerable distance off, and is a busy country doctor. Now, has the time not come for an Order similar to that recently issued in Ireland to be made by the Local Government Board, of Scotland, which shall enforce the appointment of trained nurses, and establish a standard of nursing which will prevent inefficient women being appointed to perform the duties devolving upon them?

We should avoid falling into the errors which have been made on the other side of the border, by establishing a sub-department of the Local Government Board to deal with the whole subject of nursing in poor houses, and if necessary undertake the training of its probationers in properly equipped schools. The treatment of our sick and aged paupers is fast becoming a disgrace in an age of civilization, and in the eyes of those nations which have devised other and better methods of meeting the evils of pauperism.

I am, etc.,

September 14th, 1901. SCOTSWOMAN.

A PRACTICAL POINT.

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

Dear Madam,—May I reply to the letter from "Cleanliness" in last week's issue? I presume her patients are of the "District" class. It is difficult to suppose that the feet of any other could require such strong measures as hot fomentations. I should doubt people able to tolerate such an uncleanly condition of any part of the body, being capable of feeling humiliation over the alteration of that condition. In any case the humiliation would be a wholesome lesson, of course to be given with all gentleness and kindness, and the subject to be dismissed with the cleansing process. The sooner such patients realise the necessity for keeping the feet as clean as the face, the better for all concerned.

As to the means for cleansing a patient's feet, tur-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)