

Should a Nurses' Home be Separated from the Hospital?

We are pleased to find that our Editorial remarks condemning the suggestion of the Governors of St. Bartholomew's Hospital to build the new Nurses' Home outside the precincts of the hospital has aroused widespread interest, and to learn that the nursing staff of that hospital are entirely in sympathy with our point of view. We publish below several letters of interest received from past nurses of St. Bartholomew's Hospital and others well qualified to form opinions on a question of such vital importance to the well-being of the hospital and nursing school.

To the Editor of the "British Journal of Nursing."

DEAR MADAM,—I have read of the proposal to move the Bart's nurses from the hospital precincts with mixed feelings. Sentiment and memory have invested even the old "horse-boxes" with tender recollections, but apart from that and expense I do not see any particular reason to oppose the proposed step. If the scheme is carried out in a proper and business-like manner—if proper arrangements are made for conveying the nurses to and from the hospital, if sufficient dining-rooms, sitting-rooms, lavatories, and cloak-rooms, &c., are provided for their use in the hospital—I can see no objection to their sleeping away from it, provided the distance is not very great.

For more than a year, during the rebuilding of our Nurses' Home, all our day nurses have been sleeping in houses five minutes' walk from the hospital, and though, as the arrangement was a temporary one, we had no provision for their conveyance in wet weather, no sitting-rooms for them in the hospital, no Home Sister—in fact though all the arrangements were crude, I saw enough to convince me how very much better it would be if the nursing staff were right away from the hospital when off duty. I do not think they would, at all events at first, like it themselves—we are apt to magnify every little discomfort and disagreeable into a hardship—but I am sure that in the end they would like and appreciate the change. We are very prone to imagine that because a thing has been, and has served its purpose, it cannot be altered with impunity; but I cannot see that to sleep a short distance from their daily work is a greater hardship for nurses than for typewriters, shop-girls, daily governesses, and thousands of other women who go to their work in the morning and return in the evening. Young girls who go to day-schools have to walk there in the morning and their relatives raise no objections. I do not expect the roof of the hospital would fall if the morning work began half an hour later. Of course the arrangements would have to be very complete. There would have to be sitting-rooms in the hospital for those who did not wish to go to the Home when off duty, and good cloak-rooms, fitted with separate lockers (like golf-club houses) in which to keep the nurses' cloaks, shoes, &c. In Paris I have seen private omnibuses drive round to the houses collecting boys in the morning for school, and expect it would be easy to come to some arrangement with one of the large omnibus

companies to convey the Bart's nurses to and from their destination daily.

As to the expense, I certainly think that would be greater than with an attached Home. The need for two sets of servants, as the nurses would certainly have to dine at the hospital and have breakfast and supper at the Home, would be an extra expense; the staff that would be required to superintend such a large body of nurses when off duty away from the central governing authority, and the price of the conveyances, are further items that would tend to raise the cost of the nursing staff. But I do not think the nurses personally would, or ought to, suffer by the change.

The person I should really pity would be the Matron. She would practically live with her ear to the telephone, or ruining the hospital in cabs between her two establishments, torn by a desire to be in both of them at once.

Should the St. Bartholomew's Hospital authorities decide to build their nurses' quarters away from the hospital, I believe they will find, if they do it properly, as we may take it for granted they will, that it will be an expensive and costly arrangement; but I do not see any reason why it should affect the nursing staff adversely, or destroy that good tone for which the Bart's nursing staff is justly celebrated.

Yours faithfully,

M. MOLLETT, Matron.

Royal South Hants and Southampton Hospital.

To the Editor of the "British Journal of Nursing."

DEAR MADAM,—I have been exceedingly interested in your Editorial article (January 16th) and the subsequent letters on the disadvantages attending the proposed separation of the Nurses' Home from St. Bartholomew's Hospital. I say disadvantages, for this is, justly, the only point of view taken by your correspondents.

Like "Provincial Matron," I also guinea-pigged for six months before entering the hospital, and, like her, I rejoiced greatly when the time came to sleep within the gates, although one went on duty an hour and a half earlier, and there was no comparison between the comfortable bedroom in the King's Square Home and the squalid apartment, "up the clock," shared with another probationer, in the hospital.

It was, perhaps, an especially inclement winter when we "specials" trudged to and fro morning and evening, buttoned up as it were in pillow-cases, arms inside, "by order"—a regulation which made it exceedingly difficult to carry your baggage, keep your skirts out of the mud, or regain your balance if you slipped on a glassy pavement. And what searchings of heart were caused by the baggage! One so often left behind some detail of importance. Never shall I forget my very first morning arriving in Darker minus cap-strings, and Miss Courteney Smith's comments in the dining-room on the bonnet-strings that took their place.

So irksome did we find our daily pilgrimage that eventually we subscribed among ourselves for a 'bus to carry us to and from the hospital—no light matter as the majority of us were in a chronic state of impecuniosity.

On one occasion, when working in Lucas, a "special" slipped on some soft soap, and, colliding with a scrubber, received a bucketful of dirty water all over

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