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## Editorial.

### NURSES' RATIONS.

Nurses' rations have formed a subject for discussion with more than one Board of Guardians recently. The General Purposes Committee of the Chapel-en-le-Frith Board of Guardians, for instance, recommended that each of the nurses be allowed a weekly sum instead of rations, and the tariff in force was submitted, which included the allowance of six pounds of beef weekly per person. The Guardians, however, refused to adopt the proposal of the Committee.

The dietary of the officials of the Halifax Union Hospital also occasioned a lengthy discussion by the Halifax Guardians, who adopted a reduced scale of rations, which, after reduction, included for each nurse, per week, 5 lb. of meat, 1 lb. of bacon or ham, five eggs, 1 lb. of fish,  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of cheese, specified amounts of vegetables, tea, &c., besides one fowl between every four persons. For the medical officers and Matron a more liberal scale was suggested.

It is obvious to anyone used to catering for large numbers of women that the allowances of meat are in excess of what a nurse is likely to consume. At the same time, the fact that the allowance is liberal does not necessarily mean that the nurses are well fed, for good feeding depends to a very great extent upon good cooking and appetising service, and it is in these particulars that the arrangements of nurses' meals are often sadly lacking.

The late Matron of one large metropolitan Infirmary was in receipt of weekly rations which it appears to us could only be consumed by a giant, but they were cooked by a pauper in her sitting-room, with the result that her meals were most uninviting, and good material was certainly wasted.

We have never yet solved the problem why the higher a Poor Law nursing official is placed the larger appetite she is supposed to have, but this appears to be the theory upon which ration lists are based.

The first essential in relation to food in any

public institution where the sick are received is a thoroughly good cook, so that the food of both patients and officials may be well cooked and served. Good cooking, like most other expert service, is economical, not wasteful, and, from the point of view of health alone, would be cheap at almost any price.

In regard to a money allowance to nurses in lieu of rations, this has repeatedly been proved to be undesirable. Nursing makes exacting demands upon those who undertake it, and to give nurses a fixed weekly sum to procure, and presumably to cook, their own rations, amounts practically to this, that the conscientious nurses who devote the necessary amount of time to their patients go ill-fed; the unconscientious ones, on the contrary, spend an undue time in the ward kitchens concocting toothsome dainties for their own consumption, and resent the "interruption" occasioned by the necessary demands of the patients for attention. Allowance of some kind there should be, no doubt, but it should take the form of the apportioning of a certain weekly sum per head for the guidance of the Matron or housekeeper, and within the limits of this sum she should be granted wide discretion in its expenditure.

If a diet table be laid down it is apt to become very monotonous, but a wise and thrifty housekeeper will, if permitted, watch the market and vary the dietary by the introduction of appetising and wholesome articles of food when in season. Soups in cold weather are always appreciated, and need not be costly, while in summer, salads and ripe fruit are ever welcome.

On the housekeeper and the cook the well-being, good health, and, we may add, good temper of the nursing staff and patients in an institution depend to a very great extent, and Committees and Boards of Guardians are well advised if they are careful to select for such posts officials acquainted with the value of food-stuffs and their practical application, and, having done so, if they give them considerable discretionary powers.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)