

## The Country Doctor.

By MARY CIGELY FAIR.

He is rather a shock to you when you come from a large town where you have become used to medicos decorously clad in the frock coat and silk hat of urban civilisation. He has an air of breezy good health and physical strength which seems suitable to his Harris tweed knickerbocker suit, or white cords and pink, for he is a first-class shot and a splendid rider and driver, and judge of a horse, and when he can squeeze out a day's holiday it is spent at the cover side or in the saddle.

His practice is an extensive one, and he works round a radius of some nine miles from his headquarters. It is hard work, too—the distances and rough country make it that; he faces all kinds of terrible weather, driving, riding, cycling, or sometimes when wheels and steeds give out, as the best of them will, on foot.

Country folk, especially north-country folk, are not the most tractable patients. They are not like south country town dwellers who fly to the nearest hospital or dispensary for every trifling ailment or injury; they rush to the other extreme and do not give doctor or nurse a fair chance, for they first try every weird remedy known to them for generations. When grandmother's salve, or great-aunt's drink and the rest prove clearly unsuited to patient and disease, or injury, and the patient lies at death's door, then (generally at some unearthly hour) "t' docther" receives an urgent summons, only arriving to find that things have passed beyond his skill, though with wonderful patience and gentleness he does his best, often acting as nurse as well as doctor. He is a rare hand at making poultices, especially red hot ones of the mustard variety. He not only makes them, but he sits beside you to see that you do not hurl them (with remarks which can only be represented in print by blanks) to the other side of the room; children delight in his cheery presence, all dogs fawn upon him, everyone has a word for him, though few realise how hard his work really is, or what responsibilities rest upon him.

He has perforce to dispense his own medicines, as the nearest chemist is some twenty miles away, as is the hospital, so that he is entirely dependent on his own resources, which apparently are endless.

No truer picture was ever painted than the one by Luke Fildes called "The Doctor." There is many a man and woman in out-of-the-way country places who can remember such a scene, when, as the grey dawn breaks, its sickly light falls on grief-stricken parents sick with anxiety, and the haggard, unshorn face of the doctor who has wrestled all night with the Angel of Death for the life of a child who is passing through some crisis. The crisis safely past the doctor, cheery as ever, will go forth to his day's work, a day's work which must be done

with a hand as steady, a brain as clear, as if the night had been spent in dreamless slumber.

Doctors and nurses all know that time and again they must risk their lives in contact with deadly disease as surely as any soldier who goes into the bullet zone of a battlefield, but over and above this risk, many a country doctor (aye, and nurse too) has deliberately taken his life in his hand and braved torrent and storm that he may reach some sick bed or grievous accident in time. It is his duty, and he does it manfully, and in spite of the hardships of the practice there is many a country doctor who would not exchange his life for the best practice in Harley Street; who would not become a fashionable consultant instead of merely a country doctor.

## St. Albans Diocesan Institution for Trained Nurses.

Not many weeks ago our readers' attention was called to the "Witham Nurses" in connection with the terrible accident which occurred to the "Cromer express" at this station. Our special correspondent now sends an account of a happier record in the opening of the new Nurses' Home on St. Luke's Day, by the Bishop of Colchester. The Home is situated in the highest part of Witham, and is a large, airy house with numbers of windows, which seem to drink in the sunshine.

The service of Benediction was held in the hall, the nurses with caps and aprons being marshalled on the staircase, and the visitors filling all vacant spaces. Hymns Nos. 368 and 290 in Hymns Ancient and Modern were sung, and after the Bishop (who wore his Episcopal robes) had used suitable prayers, he proceeded to the dormitories, where the service was concluded with a short address, directed especially to the nurses, and the Benediction.

It was a day of sunshine and happiness to all who took part in it, and we trust that the Bishop's blessing may rest on our work, and his words of counsel and encouragement inspire our workers to fresh devotion and self-sacrifice.

It may, perhaps, interest some readers of the Journal to glance back at the history of the institution, now in its thirty-sixth year.

It was founded in 1869 by Miss Mary Ann Luard, of Witham, Essex, and Mrs. Claughton, wife of the Bishop of St. Albans. Some eight years previously a terrible epidemic of typhoid fever had ravaged the little village of Terling, about four miles from Witham. In those days skilled nursing was not to be had in the abundance with which it may now be obtained. Miss M. A. Luard rendered every assistance possible by her daily ministrations in the stricken village, and the sight of the death and suffering around her became the inspiration of her life's work, and resulted in the foundation of a nursing institution for the Diocese of St. Albans. The work

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