

The Sick Poor in a Rural District.

AN EXPERIENCE IN THE LIFE OF A PRIVATE NURSE.

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Next morning all the patients were worse, and I was more determined than ever to have them moved where they could be decently and properly nursed when I saw the place by daylight.

The R. O. drove over about 10.30 a.m., and we went round looking for a suitable house, but were unsuccessful. We could only find two empty. One would not be let for "fever," and the other was most unsuitable from a sanitary point of view. On hearing our report, the doctor wired to the M. O. H. for the county; he replied that he was helpless to move in the matter. I suggested the workhouse infirmary as a last resource; the R. O. said they had not a sufficient staff there. I said I would go there and get the help of a trained nurse; and at last the Chairman of the Board of Guardians was communicated with, and he came out about 5 p.m. After a good deal of discussion, in which I absolutely refused to nurse the cases under existing conditions, and pointed out the risk to the whole village if they carried out their idea of a handy woman, the Chairman decided to send them to the workhouse infirmary, where they had just had a new ward built on the men's side with bathroom and lavatory, but which was unfurnished. The Master of the workhouse was telephoned to and asked to prepare four beds at once and arrange for a nurse who would accompany the patients. Then we had a committee of ways and means of how to get them there. At last the landlord of the inn agreed to give us an old sort of 'bus, and the R. O. got two blankets from the shop which supplied the workhouse. He decided I should take the two youngest girls and return for the big boy and girl in the morning, as it was now nearly 8 p.m.

When it came to moving the children, we had a fearful scene with the mother, who, as the poor people say, "carried on dreadful," and declared her children should not go away. The big girl was just as bad as her mother, and, of course, the little girl followed suit; the youngest was too ill to do more than whimper. The father, I am glad to say, was firm, and carried them out himself. The boy was put up and off we started on our five mile drive, with a stable lantern inside to give us a little light. Little Bessie soon stopped screaming, and settled down to enjoy the novelty of her "carriage drive." Arrived at the workhouse, we found a lovely, large, airy

ward and a roaring fire. The Superintendent Nurse and her assistant and one or two women in workhouse dress were in the ward, and appeared to be throwing mattress and bed-clothes about. The Superintendent Nurse, it appears, was furious at our intrusion, and she had been given no time to make a protest, and so was venting her wrath on everything and everyone that came within her reach. When I grasped the condition of affairs, I intimated very firmly that I did not require help; I could easily make up the beds myself, so they all went off. The assistant nurse returned with some supper for me on a tray, and very kindly offered to try to procure me a couple of chairs. Then the Matron appeared to know what I should want for the night; so I gave her a list, and she most kindly sent everything across without any fuss or trouble. I proceeded to bath and feed my patients, who had been rather frightened at the turmoil when we arrived. Little Mabel's delight at finding herself clothed in a night-gown quite woke her up enough to inquire, "Has Bessie got a night-gownd on, too?" The mattresses were of ticking stuffed with straw; an opening was left in the middle, into which you plunged your hands when making the bed and shook the straw up. Mabel was like a pea on a drum the first night, so full was her mattress stuffed. I had to barricade her all round to prevent her falling off. She was restless all night. "Ma, may I have a drink?" or "Ma, has Bessie got a night-gownd on, too?" were questions she asked at frequent intervals.

Next morning the Superintendent Nurse turned up, still in a bad temper; it is sincerely to be hoped there are not many of that type of women in our country workhouse infirmaries. She began by saying: "I can't spare my assistant to help you," etc., etc. I told her another trained nurse was coming at once to share the nursing with me, and that there would be no necessity for either her or her assistant to come near us—in fact, we would much prefer that they did not. Then the next grievance was, where were we to sleep; she had no room for us. I suggested the Master would arrange that—that was quite enough. She promptly turned two phthisical cases, who were undergoing a sort of open-air treatment, out of a small ward down a passage near our ward, which nurse and I shared, and she managed to get us two bedsteads and bedding.

When Nurse H. arrived, accompanied by the R. O., I went off to fetch the other two cases, and found I could only take one at a time. I had to help the father carry them both down and into the bus; no one in the

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