

they have never been trained to lift their ideas out of the groove of their own personality and into the higher region of common sense and consideration for their patient. The class known as monthly nurses are well known to excel in spirited narration on such subjects. They are never weary of relating what doctors call "cases," and invariably select something that bears, with frightful aptitude, upon the patient's own condition. These things engender dark thoughts during the long and lonely hours of night in a sick room. With better-educated nurses, freedom from this morbid taste may be hoped for. A woman of culture knows how to lead a patient's thoughts up and beyond self. She never dwells too long upon one topic, comprehending that variety is as indispensable to mental as it is to physical food, but judiciously caters for the invalid among the well-stored shelves of memory, with an occasional excursion into the higher realms of imagination. There is another class of people whose visits are rarely beneficial to the occupant of a sick bed. Their tendency towards gloomy-mindedness or religious fanaticism renders their company depressing. Doctors dread their visits almost as much as the unfortunate patient. To be cried over can never be agreeable, even when we are well. When weak and suffering, it rouses a keen feeling of resentment rather than any softening sentiment of gratitude. But joy and cheerfulness are not usually in the creed of the "unco' guid," and their ministrations are too often entirely in the spirit of the tract lately sent to Netley Hospital. The Pecksniffs of real life should not be allowed to have it all their own way with our wounded soldiers, and it may be hoped that the chaplain's recent appeal may elicit some more enlivening works than were sent in response to previous requests for wholesome, cheerful, healthful literature for the invalids.

NURSING ECHOES.

*** Communications (duly authenticated with name and address, not for publication, but as evidence of good faith) are specially invited for these columns.*

EVERYONE is much amused and rather surprised to find that an organ in the press which belongs to a certain gentleman, or did belong to him before it was taken up by a company, has lost its temper over the National Pension Fund. It is an old saying, which is recognised as true even to-day, that a "lost temper is surest sign of a lost cause"; and it certainly appears to me that under the circumstances it would have been more politic of the paper in question to have dissembled a little, and pretended that it rather liked all the criticisms its pet fund had received.

It is certainly a matter for wonder if it was really thought that the *Lancet* and this journal would, through fear or favour, abstain from expressing perfectly courteous, common-sense opinions on this scheme. Had either or both done so, I certainly consider they would have failed in their bounden duty to nurses, who, as people naturally unaccustomed to business, looked, of course, to their professional journals to instruct them in such a matter as this. But, now that the scheme is quite understood, it is apparent that it is utterly unsuitable for nurses in every way.

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I HEARD the matter put very simply and shortly the other day by a doctor who takes the greatest interest in all nursing matters, and who, referring to the discussion that has taken place in the papers, wrote at my request his ideas as follows:—"The scheme has evidently been drawn up in a charitable commercial spirit, by someone who knows little or nothing about nurses. Whether the fund is good, bad, or indifferent; whether any woman could live, or starve, on £30 a year, or not; whether the premiums are 7 per cent. below those offered by Government, or 27 per cent. above those offered by any given insurance office, are doubtless all highly interesting questions in the abstract."

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"BUT the one and only essential practical point is this—If a nurse has any friends or home to go to, or prospect of marriage, or chance of future provision, of course she will not join any pension fund of any kind. Why on earth should she do so? So that only leaves for consideration those few nurses who have arrived at the age of, say, forty, and find themselves friendless, unattached to any hospital institution which will in due time pension them itself, penniless, and alone in the world. How many nurses are really in that condition? I mean, of course, trained nurses of good character. Certainly not one in a hundred. I believe that is a wide allowance, but let us grant it. That is to say, that out of the estimated 15,000 nurses there are about 150 in this hopeless, homeless, forlorn condition. Now, in the name of all that is wonderful, how are these women—earning on an average, say, £26 a year—to pay £43 a year to the fund? The idea is too ridiculous for further argument."

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WITHOUT reducing the matter to figures, like the above, any practical nurse could have told the kind-hearted, but visionary, promoters of this scheme that it could never work: firstly, because there are so few who really need a pension; and, secondly, because those few could not afford to pay anything at all for it. I hope our cross contemporary will soon recover its temper, and see how ridiculous it is to accuse this journal of "wrecking" the scheme,

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