

only had so far prevailed to overcome natural repugnance to the performance of the offices of the sick-room. The one was, of course, devotion to religious duty, especially in Orders of which self-abnegation is the central idea, and the other family or personal affection. The first of these motives is undoubtedly still operative with great numbers of the girls who take up the vocation of Nursing as a profession; but one of the most remarkable features of the modern Nursing movement is the development of a liking—we might almost say a passion—for Nursing with all its disagreeables as a profession. This professional zeal is guarded and strengthened by the wearing of a sort of uniform, not only in the sick room but in the home or street, and by the adoption of a system of discipline, which, in many places, shelters the Nurse by making her one of a lay sisterhood, obeying rules, living in community, and with an organisation to protect her against unfair usage, or the inconveniences of irregular private residence.

* * *

Since religious bodies have been so closely associated with Nursing, it is but fair to acknowledge the pioneers in the work, first in the Roman Catholic and then in the Anglican Church—ladies to whom every South African, and particularly the men of the Diamond and Gold Fields, owe a debt of gratitude which can never be repaid. The field has now, however, become too wide for the Hospital Nurse, who, moreover, has still her own arduous duties to perform. There are some few private Nurses in the country, and no organisation need ever take away all opportunity for the exercise of their profession by ladies who prefer to work as a doctor works from their own front door. There are, however, great advantages in organisation. The Nurse leads an exceptional life, not without dangers and difficulties that can be best met by life in community with women engaged in the same peculiar and trying calling. If at present this associated life should be found only in connection with some form of religious effort, we trust that there are few amongst us, even of those who hold all creeds outworn, who would not frankly recognise the enormous advantages to be found in some religious cement for the organisation. It is for this reason that we have held the establishment of the Nurse's Home by the Cape General Mission in Cape Town (of which some account has from time to time appeared in these columns) to be one of the greatest boons which that Mission could have conferred upon the community. Religious differences are a tender point; but we have to take things as they are; and there are many families in which the Nurses from such an Institution would be welcome, while equally devoted ladies from other Institutions would not. We take the facts as we find them and only rejoice that these are organisations to meet all human scruples or weaknesses.

* * *

There are at present only eight Nurses in the Home in Bree Street—we could wish that there were eighty. The Home is intended to be in one sense self-supporting—that is, it should not be any great burden on the funds of the Mission although nothing could more popularise the Mission and excuse some possible eccentricities to the worldling than the existence of so practically benevolent a branch of its operations. During the year 1892 we learn there were 145 paying cases attended and 30 non-paying while the time of the Nurses was so occupied that 38 cases had to be unwillingly refused. With every exercise of economy, including a very low scale of reward for service rendered, there is a deficit on the year's working of some £25. The Nurses though they may be women of refinement and education

do not enter the homes of the suffering to be themselves waited upon but come as genuine helps, bringing sympathy and comfort, which are in their way as valuable as material service. Their religious ministrations are joyfully given when desired; but we are assured that no such ministrations would be obtrusively thrust in any patient's way. The question that presents itself is whether it is worth five and twenty pounds to Cape Town to have had for twelve months a known centre from which at any hour so far as Nurses have been available, help in sickness could be sought? The answer should be so emphatic that an exception has been made on behalf of a young and struggling Institution and the editor of the 'Argus' will take charge of any donations which readers may be disposed to forward to clear off the deficit of 1892 and set the Institution fairly in the way of prosperity and usefulness for 1893. All such donations will be duly acknowledged and handed to the Director of the Mission, and we trust that the amount will enable him to report that the Home is no burden on the proper work of the Mission."

* * *

I AM sorry to hear that there is a feeling prevalent in Taunton that the Jubilee Nursing Institute in that town has not efficiently carried out the objects for which it was founded. Considering the importance of the work and its necessity to the sick poor, I earnestly hope that means may be found by some system of amalgamation of utilising to the fullest extent the funds which the benevolent have provided for the promotion of District Nursing in Taunton and its locality. A correspondent of the *Somerset County Gazette* wrote last week to our contemporary a letter, in which the following sentences occur:—

"When it was found that the Institute was utterly failing to discharge its duty a few zealous friends of the poor, who strongly felt that they should not be neglected, started the District Nursing Association, a society which is doing a most excellent work, but one which would have been quite unnecessary had the Nursing Institute carried out what it was intended to do. But it is hard, to say the least of it, that those who generously subscribed to the Institute should have to be asked to put their hands into their pockets again to provide a benefit for the poor which it was contemplated the other should supply. I am sure the late Mr. Broadmead, of Langport, would never have subscribed in the exceedingly munificent way in which he did had he thought his money was to be allotted to the provision of Nurses for the middle and upper classes who can well afford to provide them out of their own pockets. And, Sir, it must be remembered that the erection of the Institute prevented other worthy memorials of Her Majesty's Jubilee from being raised, and notably a children's ward for the Hospital, which Major Barrett so much insisted on, and which he so unwillingly saw abandoned. Altogether I think the contributors to the Taunton District Nursing Association have acted in a very modest way in merely asking for a grant from the funds of the Institute, which, it may be remarked, are invested to an amount of about £5,000. They might, indeed, have asked that the governors of the Institute should carry out the objects for which the Institute was originated. I sincerely hope that the discussion which is taking place in your columns may not be without effect, and that both sick and maternity Nurses may be provided for the poor out of the Institute funds and without deeply intrenching on the generosity of the inhabitants of Somerset in these bad times."

S. G.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)