

National Health Society.

Our Foreign Letter.

PRESIDENT:—THE DUKE OF WESTMINSTER, K.G.

In the absence of Miss Deane, the "Homely Talks" at Chatham are being carried on by Mrs. Dickson, a universally appreciated lecturer of the Society. The audience, last week, numbered two hundred, having begun with about fifty. The numbers of an audience depend primarily on the efforts of the local secretary, but the increase is an undoubted testimony to the efficiency of the lecturer.

A series of six "Homely Talks" has been arranged to take place at St. Mary's Institute, Greenwich, beginning on Tuesday, 14th inst., at 2.30 p.m. The first three to be illustrated by practical demonstrations—according to the subject of the lecture—on making poultices, the use of disinfectants, how to carry a helpless patient, the preparation of a few good recipes, &c.

The fees for the lectures on "First Aid to the Injured and Sick," now being given at the Post Office, Fore Street, by Mr. Owen Lankester, have been considerably reduced, in accordance with his wish, for the purpose of affording an opportunity for a much larger number of the employees to attend. This course will be followed by one on "Sick Nursing."

Miss Morgan has just concluded a most successful course of "Talks," in Devonshire, her audiences beginning at 300, and increasing to over 900 persons.

From the Secretary of the Ilminster sub-district we hear that the lectures lately given in that locality "were most successful. Miss Williams proved herself an excellent lecturer, and was most popular with all classes. Regret was expressed when the course came to an end."

Miss Stackpoole tells the following anecdote, as an illustration of the practical outcome of the "Homely Talks":—"Amongst the most attentive of her listeners, she had frequently noticed a quiet-looking woman, who, although she never came forward in the practical demonstration work, still seemed to be 'taking it all in.' It came to the lecturer's ears that this woman was attending the 'Talks' under difficulties, her husband objecting, and telling her she 'had better bide at home, and look after the house, instead of gadding off to the 'Talks,' which was no good at all.' Shortly afterwards, the unbelieving husband was taken seriously ill, and the doctor ordered the bedding to be changed without disturbing the patient. This, thanks to the instruction she had had at the lectures, the woman was able to do, and nursed her patient so well that he expressed the hope 'she would go to as many of those 'Homely Talks' as she could, and whenever she liked; they had taught her to make him so comfortable."

As Nursing forms so great and interesting a part of the teaching of the National Health Society, it is hoped that a good number of its members will take tickets and be present at the annual *Conversazione* of the Royal British Nurses' Association, to be held at Princes' Hall, on Thursday, the 7th of December, at 8.30 p.m. Those who attended last year were deeply interested in this picturesque gathering of working women.

THE INDIAN ARMY NURSING SERVICE.

It is a great drawback to the Indian Nursing Service that newly appointed members should have so little opportunity of learning beforehand some details of the nature of the life they will have to lead, and of the work they will be expected to perform. In some cases this has led to much disappointment and discontent, some Nursing Sisters discovering it all to be very different from their expectations, and finding themselves obliged to put up with annoyances, and to cope with difficulties they had never anticipated. I feel, therefore, that a few words addressed to those who may be thinking of taking service in India, will not be out of place.

On reaching Bombay, the Nursing Sisters receive their orders, and learn their destinations for the first time. It is difficult to give a clear, general idea of the work, because, though all military hospitals in India are subject to the same regulations, and the same general organisation, still the actual government of each hospital depends entirely on the medical officer in charge of the station, and their opinions and ideas on the subject of Nursing, and of what Nurses can or ought to be expected to do, vary very greatly; so the Nurse's work is consequently much more advantageously organised in some places than in others.

Then again, the work has to be differently arranged according to the number of Nursing Sisters employed in each place. In the larger Stations, as many as four live and work together, in other stations there are only three, in some not more than two.

In most places there are often healthy months when there is little serious sickness, and then the work may be described, from a professional point of view, as distinctly "dull." On the other hand, especially at certain seasons of the year, there will be severe outbreaks of fever, when the Nurses are often very severely taxed. It will be obvious that so small a staff of Nurses in each place, with little or no trained assistance, cannot possibly take efficient charge of a very large number of beds. The usual practice is to place only one or two wards at a time under the Sister's care, and to place all the more serious cases which require real nursing in these wards. The Sisters generally take their hours off and on duty by turns, so that constant supervision may be exercised both by day and by night. It is only when there are too few Nurses to do the work thoroughly that regular night duty is impossible, and it is always disheartening when this is the case. The orderlies require a great deal of teaching, and new ones, naturally, are frequently most untrustworthy. It is, therefore, impossible that the patients should receive the attention they require unless one of the Nurses is always on duty, each in her turn. But I frankly acknowledge that this is a great trial to the Nurses. They can never have the satisfaction of feeling that any one case, or any one portion of the ward is their own especial pride and care; and it requires a great deal of mutual forbearance and self-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)