



Our Irish Letter.

NOTES ON NURSING INSTITUTIONS.—A CRYING
EVIL.

APPLICANTS to many of the existing Institutions for supplying "Trained Nurses" when required—being often the greatest boon to Society, and blessing to suffering individuals and their friends—and the supporters of the Hospitals supplying such, have little idea as to the sources from which their applications are often met, an important point which must ere long, in the interests of humanity, be considered and rectified. Many existing Institutions, in Ireland, for supplying what are supposed to be, and designated, "Trained Nurses," are mere asylums or institutions for "Nurse Farming"; or emporiums for occasionally lodging white Female Slaves, undergoing penal servitude with hard labour; or money-making machines for the sole benefit of mercantile speculators as commercial transactions; or for augmenting the incomes of Hospitals or Charitable Institutions to which they are attached. If these Institutions were all, as some of them are, conducted and organised upon a proper basis, they would be of great value and benefit to the community; but the reverse must be said as regards others because they are, as above described, for hiring out for the benefit not of themselves, but, unfairly, that of the Institutions, women, often unduly overworked in their Hospitals, and, when out nursing, treated in a way that would not be tolerated in any convict prison in the Kingdom, and cruelly underpaid, and for whom no provision is made for their after life, or for their becoming incapacitated for work by illness or old age—the very arduous occupation of these women (many of good birth and education and sensitive minds) rendering them peculiarly liable to disease and illness, and thus becoming disabled from work. There is no class of beings of more use when their services are required, or deserving of more sympathy and thought, than a properly suitable, trained Nurse. Humanity should

demand that all such Institutions be so conducted, and their accounts so kept, that the net incomes of the earnings of the Nurses attached thereto can be ascertained and adjusted, and a fair portion thereof applied towards the cost of maintaining the Institution, and the residue reserved and set apart and applied for the benefit of the Nurses, who earned it, when ill or unable to work. Many are shocked when they learn how the matter now stands, and have become convinced that a continuance of such a system cannot much longer be tolerated.

Provision must (for such of these Nursing Institutions as hope to prosper and long exist) be made for properly paying overworked, and now greatly underpaid, Nurses, and making a provision for them when incapacitated, by illness or old age, from work, and that they shall not, as a reward for their labours, have to endure often a long lingering illness, in a state of insolvency, unthought of, and uncared for, all done to create funds to pay shareholders of a mercantile transaction, or to produce funds to maintain Hospitals for relieving suffering patients—the latter being under the guardianship of men considered "Christian Philanthropists."

These "Nurse-Farming Institutions" are, in many instances, supplied with materials for working their machinery by young women of tender age and little experience, matured neither in mind or body, and unsuitably educated to encounter the distressing scenes daily, and often hourly, presenting themselves in the wards of a Hospital, or when out nursing; and who, when much too young, become Probationers or apprenticed to learn Nursing as a profession; and often, after a year, sent out to nurse, to earn large sums for the Institution to which they are attached; designated, and paid for as a "Trained Nurse," and upon whose judgment, and supposed experience, and assumed knowledge, often depends the comfort and the very lives of those on whose behalf they are employed. These young women are thus unjustly deprived of a portion of the three years' training now deemed essential to secure a Nurse occupation in most Nursing Institutions in the Kingdom as a trained Nurse, unmatured in mind or body, without knowledge or experience, often to encounter the most trying and painful scenes requiring much knowledge, tact, judgment, thought, and decision; many of them become permanently broken down and incapacitated from further work, and left in absolute want, whilst the money that, by their labours, they had earned, had been diverted and applied to other purposes than making any provision for their position, and thereby they are compelled to become the recipients of charity or to end their days in a Poor House.

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