

Our American Letter.

A NURSES' CLUB.

BY AN ENGLISH NURSE IN NEW YORK.

I AM sure my fellow-workers in London and elsewhere will be interested in hearing about a Club that some of us Nurses in New York have just started. The whole history of it is as follows:—Mrs. Kate Teachman, who has an office at 15, West 42nd Street, which she calls "The Home Bureau Delicacies for the Sick," and where are furnished all kinds of nourishing soups, jellies, etc., for invalids, owing to constant solicitations from physicians and others desiring competent Nurses, decided, about fourteen months ago, to open a Registry for trained Nurses. Being well-known by many of the best physicians and surgeons in New York, whose patients reap the advantage of her delicacies, she soon had applicants for her Registry, followed by a goodly list of Nurses, although she would accept none but those who had proved themselves thoroughly trained, amiable in their work, and of good character. The Registry succeeded so well, and its members were in such demand during its first winter of existence, that Mrs. Teachman concluded she would, with our aid, start a Club for us (an idea she had always had) this year, more especially, as she had had a good offer of part of two houses, 104 and 106, West 41st Street, belonging to an Episcopalian Dispensary, where we could have our Club Room, and she could furnish bed rooms, and rent them to Club members. A sufficient number of the members of Mrs. Kate Teachman's Registry agreed at once to adding another \$5 to the original yearly payment of like amount, and so enable her to carry out her admirable scheme of providing us with a pleasant room, where we have a daily Newspaper, some periodicals of different kinds, which some of us provide (I, for instance, supply the Club with the *Nurses' Journal*—being a member of the Royal British Nurses' Association—and also with THE NURSING RECORD AND HOSPITAL WORLD, and some other Nurse supplies *The Trained Nurse*); and we have a bookcase with the nucleus of a library which we have all helped to collect, and we have a desk and writing materials for our correspondence.

We held our first meeting on the evening of the 1st November to discuss our Club affairs, and Mrs. Teachman might have spared herself all feeling of nervousness as to whether we would talk, or sit round the room speechless, as we women are apt to do when we ought to give expression to our opinions. However, we pioneers of our small Club were too much in earnest to be self-conscious on this occasion, and talked enough to please even Mrs. Teachman. Dr. Robert C. Mylles, of the Dispensary, came, according to promise, to address a few words of welcome to us, and his few words lengthened into a talk of about an hour, for we plied him with many questions. He complimented us on the lines we were adopting for the working of our Club, notably doing without "red tape," which kills so many enterprises. We told him that we had made Mrs. Teachman into president, secretary, and everything else to run the Club, as we considered her so thoroughly able an organizer, and that in her hands we put the power absolute of turning out any member who might prove herself objectionable and undesirable.

Since then we have held several meetings amongst ourselves, who at present number under thirty, but we expect to increase our membership later on, as many Nurses have signified their intention of joining as soon as they have the means to do so, there having been very little sickness this season, so far, to give them employment. At one of our meetings we started a "Mutual Benefit Fund" for times of illness amongst ourselves; as Nurses in New York, who have been trained elsewhere, fare badly when sickness overtakes them. The Hospitals here make no allowance for them (at least such has been the experience of those Nurses I have met) as they do in England, and so it is a very expensive matter to be ill. Our insurance is to be worked on the following plan:—We each pay an initiation fee of \$2, and monthly dues of fifty cents, and at the end of three months each member of the fund is entitled to \$5 a week whilst ill, or to be nursed at 104, West 41st Street, by one of the Club members in a room there, which we intend to rent for that purpose from Mrs. Teachman—the member can have her own doctor to attend her there. At the end of three months after joining the Fund, the sum of fifty dollars is allowed in case of death. Each member of the Fund is expected to provide two or more honorary members who will subscribe \$5 per year, or, by the donation of \$100 become entitled to life-membership. Some of our number belonging to the Club, which we call "The Home Bureau Registry Nurses' Club," have instituted ourselves into a volunteer corps to help the doctors connected with the dispensary, with any charity Nursing they may require when we are free to do so—some such work has already been done by one or two of our members since the Club was started.

On the 6th of this month (December) we gave a house-warming, from 3 to 5 p.m. Our table decorations were white and pink, and in the centre of the table was a handsome floral ornament of roses, pansies, and ferns. We darkened the rooms, and lighted pink candles, under shades of the same colour; we members dressed in our Nursing uniforms, and the effect was very good. Our Club is altogether cosmopolitan, which we wish it to be, so the dresses were somewhat varied, but the prevailing colour was pale blue, which is much affected by American Nurses. Several newspaper reporters were present, and, one of them, having taken a fancy to my uniform (foundation of it being that worn at dear old Bart's) put me through my facings, and, amongst other things, wanted to know if English Nurses are less gifted in intellectual brightness than their American cousins, as they, the former, are generally required to undergo a three years' training, whereas the latter have two years only allowed them before they graduate! The reporter next patronizingly asked me if there were any disease I should be afraid to nurse, and seemed rather surprised when I answered after a slight hesitation: "I am not sure that I should care to undertake a case of leprosy. I have not quite made up my mind about that yet." The questioning stopped after that.

Our reception was a success—it went off well. Amongst our guests were doctors of both the gentler and sterner sex, and representative people in the Nursing world of New York. We regaled our guests with light refreshments, and entertainment in the way of singing, recitation, and some sleight-of-hand performances, the latter given by one of the doctors.

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