

## The Indian Nursing Service.

BY ADELAIDE I. WATSON.

ACCORDING to the old adage there is nothing new under the sun. Whatever is written about now, is comparatively old; still, old subjects assume new phases.

We have entered the Trooping Season — all absorbing to those whose lives are to be cast in the far East for an indefinite period, perhaps, for ever. This is the time chosen by Government for sending out Army Nursing Sisters for the Indian Service. As so many enquires have been made concerning it, fuller and more detailed information than can be officially obtained, may be of service to those about to undertake in India the nursing of our soldiers, and, in fact, to all at home and abroad interested in the welfare of those who engage in the good work.

Each department in Nursing work is of equal importance, but the system of work in the Service in India is vastly different to that at home in a Civil Hospital, and through climatic influences, entails much more devotion and responsibility. For this reason it is advisable that those desirous of entering this branch of the Profession, should know more of the life they are going to, with its disadvantages, advantages, and peculiarities.

Greater care on the part of the authorities, in the selection of candidates, which really means a stricter adherence to its own regulations, and a little more knowledge on the part of the Nurse, as to what may await her in India, might result in fewer disappointments on both sides.

In the regulations of the Indian Nursing Service, Section iii., par. 21 (*b*), of the qualifications of candidates, requires that "each Nurse must produce a certificate from some person of good social position (not a member of her own family), to the effect that her family is one of respectability and good standing in society, and that she possesses the tact, temper, and ability qualifying her for the appointment."

As no lady enters the Nursing Service with a view to its possible advantages, the existence thereof being the subject of divided opinion, I will deal primarily with the disadvantages, of which a thoughtful and practical view would be commendable.

Apart from the hardship attending the work in a much more exacting climate, under conditions which are very exhausting, the home and social life in India is quite different to that which obtains in an English Hospital. This has been foreseen and provided for in the regulation quoted. Were these regulations in every case honourably met and strictly enforced, the petty trials we hear of in the

home-life of some of the Sisters, would be greatly obviated, although faults of disposition and peculiarities of character are accidents of birth, and common to most mortals.

In an English Civil Hospital, women of every social position are admitted as Nurses; they are not dependent on each other for society. There is no social intercourse outside their work, and further in the outside world no social importance is attached to their position as Nurses. Beyond doing their duty in the sphere in which they work, what is understood by Society in the great world, demands nothing of them, and takes no cognisance of their existence.

In India it is otherwise; the regulations of the service, and the exigencies of Society outside their work, amply illustrate the wisdom of the rule of selection.

Without desiring in the least to be critical (for in my own experience of the Indian Nursing Service, I have known only happiness, professionally, and socially), it must be admitted that where ladies have to live together, in a restricted home circle, education, refinement, and tact, are important factors in their happiness and comfort.

If it should happen that these factors be absent, the disadvantages in India would be many and various.

The vexatious restrictions on the recreations of the Sisters, which were officially issued last year, and have since been justly rescinded, were an evidence of the truth of my statement. Not wishing to enter more fully into this phase of the subject, I confine myself to stating that the necessity for issuing such restrictions has been a cause of serious trial to the Sisters, and has been felt by them very keenly.

It is not within the province of my article to enter into the Hospital work in India, which, in system, differs from that in England. There is, however, just as much work to be done, and just as much, if not more, devotion required as at home. In this Service I had the honour to work with some of the kindest and most self-sacrificing Nursing Sisters that I have met in a long experience of Nursing the sick.

With regard to the advantages of the Service, a view which I scarcely think enters into the calculation of anyone joining it, they are varied and peculiar.

A Nurse should be constitutionally strong enough to support the climate and withstand the exceptional calls upon her devotion, in periods, alas! not infrequent, of epidemics of enteric fever and other distressing illnesses. Her life, at any station she may be attached to, is made happy and pleasant apart from her work, by the generous hospitality and kindly thoughtfulness of the military and civil residents, which compensates greatly for the long

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