

assuredly involve frequent outbreaks of puerperal fever, so that the proposal, if carried out, would probably be productive of wholesale and most culpable womanslaughter. The suggestion of such a combination of work would indeed be inexcusable if it did not arise from extreme and absolute ignorance. We most earnestly advise the promoters of the Essex County Cottage Nursing Association to withdraw their circular at once and to consult a medical man or a thoroughly trained Nurse before they take such a fatal step as that which they now, evidently in all innocence, suggest.

We pass on to consider the suggestion of the remuneration proposed for these "skilled Nurses." "As the Nurses are trained they will be sent out into such parishes as may desire their services. Any parish or group of adjoining parishes can have the entire services of a Nurse for £33 per year—£32 payable to the Nurse and £1 payable to the Association." The context shows that out of this "she will provide her own board," but that lodgings will have to be provided for her either in the house of the patient or elsewhere. Putting aside the obvious fact that a District Nurse could not possibly be permanently located in the house of one patient, and that if she were so located she would cease to be a District Nurse, we presume from this statement that the Association intends to provide lodgings, but leaves the Nurse to provide her board out of the £32 a year with which she is remunerated. We imagine that it would cost her at least ten shillings a week for food and washing, so that her services will produce her only £6 per year, or 2s. 4d. per week, with which to provide herself clothing and make some provision for her old age. This one hundred and twenty shillings per annum then apparently represents the salary which the Essex County Cottage Nursing Association considers an adequate salary for a "skilled Nurse." The only comment which is possible is that this Association has either a very erroneous impression of the pecuniary remuneration of a skilled Nurse, or that it considers that its skilled Nurses will be of very little value.

Finally, we object most strongly to the principle upon which it is proposed to raise money for the support of this scheme. It is stated that this will, to some extent, be accomplished "by contributions from the poor who shall be encouraged to join a Nursing Benefit Fund and pay a small sum per week or month. The members of the club would always have the first claim upon a Nurse."

Now, the experience of medical clubs has proved beyond dispute that nothing tends so greatly to degrade medical men by placing them at the careless beck and call of ignorant day labourers, and in such considerable measure to bring discredit upon the profession, and inefficient attendance to the sick, as this system. We take it that it would undoubtedly have the same effect in the case of

Nurses, and therefore protest as strongly as we can against the introduction of this pernicious plan in their case. Providence is very well in its way, and it would, doubtless, be possible to organise a Provident Nursing Scheme with benefit to everyone concerned; but certainly not on the lines now suggested.

#### CARBOLIC ACID POISONING.

The case of poisoning which occurred last week at a Metropolitan Hospital adds one more to the list—already far too long—of Nursing accidents. It appears that some blue bottles had been sent to the dispensary but not filled, and that one of the Sisters, therefore, obtained the keys from the resident medical officer, went to the dispensary, and filled these bottles with carbolic acid. One of the bottles, however, was labelled "Olive Oil," and shortly afterwards, another Nurse desiring to give an infant a teaspoonful of this oil, obtained, as she thought, what she needed, and administered it to the infant who speedily required tracheotomy and in due course died. In the first place, as the coroner pointed out, the doctor was to blame for permitting unskilled Sisters to dispense. Then the management of the Hospital is evidently in fault or a poison bottle would not have been labelled, nor expected to contain, Olive oil. This is a point which was evidently overlooked at the inquiry, but one which, to our minds, is most significant of general laxity, and want of careful supervision. This is still further exemplified by the fact of the Nurse filling a teaspoon from a Winchester quart bottle—a manoeuvre which must have required some care—and never observing the distinctive characteristics of the fluid she was about to administer. We imagine that the "Nurse" must have been a very new Probationer, and that her action emphasizes the need for some better system of supervision over the Nursing Staff in this Institution.

#### A NURSE'S ACTION.

A very important action has been brought by a Nurse against the Matron and Managers of a Scottish Hospital for "wrongous dismissal." It appears that she entered the Institution as a Probationer in January last, and that in April the Matron told her to leave the Hospital in a fortnight, alleging that she was careless and unfit for the duties of a Nurse. The evidence showed two facts very distinctly—that the Probationer was, almost immediately after admission, given very responsible duties to fulfil; and that the responsibility of keeping or discharging the Probationer rested entirely upon the Matron. The mistakes which it was alleged that the Nurse had made, we confess, appear to us to be very excusable when her absolute ignorance and inexperience is remembered. But the position in which the Matron has been placed by the exercise of powers entrusted to her, and doubtless employed in all good faith, furnishes a most valuable object-lesson for all other Matrons to observe. It proves the necessity—to which attention has frequently been drawn in these columns—that each Nurse should be discharged by the Committee, which would save the Matron from the grave responsibility which is placed upon her, in some Institutions, of discharging Probationers, and so making herself personally liable not only to odium but even to legal proceedings.

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