

## Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association.

### NOTES FROM REPORT FOR 1895.

WE have to report a year of unprecedented activity in the question of Workhouse Nursing. Had we possessed the means of training ten times the number of Nurses sent to work this year, employment would probably have been found for them all. It has not been easy to fill the vacancies caused by Nurses leaving their posts on expiration of their period of service, but whenever possible this has been done.

It may be desirable that we should first of all state the general position of the Association on the following points:—

(1) *As to the training of Nurses in 1895.*—This is the most important and costly branch of our work. We have trained in Hospitals and Infirmarys, 19; still in training, 24; in midwifery training 3 completed the course, and 1 is still in training. Eight Probationers failed during their month of trial; 5 through ill-health, and 3 were found unsuitable for training.

(2) *Appointment of Nurses.*—During the year 87 Nurses have been engaged from the Association by Boards of Guardians. Of these 69 were trained by us and 18 were Nurses trained by other Institutions. Thirteen Nurses have finished their term of agreement and left the Association for various reasons, viz.: 5 to be married; 1 for promotion; 1 for training in midwifery at her own expense; 6 for other work.

(3) *Applications for Nurses.*—The number of applications has largely exceeded our supply of Nurses. During the year we have received 199 applications. Thirty-three Boards of Guardians have applied for the first time, and nine of these have been supplied with Nurses from the Association. There are now fifty-three Workhouse Infirmarys supplied by us.

There can be no question that very great difficulty is experienced by many Boards of Guardians, especially in country districts, in obtaining the services of trained Nurses. This difficulty must, we feel, continue to increase unless a few of the Metropolitan Infirmarys throw open their training to Probationers outside their own staff. At present the question of training is a very serious one, and meets our Association at many points. A large number of Hospitals at which we formerly trained Probationers now send out private Nurses, and can therefore only train for their own work. Fees for training are also much higher than they used to be. The question can only be met in the future by the admission of paying Probationers to the large and well-managed Infirmarys of London; the smaller Infirmarys, whether in London or the country, cannot, for obvious reasons, give a complete and efficient training.

We much regret that we have been compelled to discontinue the supply of Nurses to St. George's-in-the-East Infirmary, where, for the last nine years, all nursing vacancies as they occurred were filled by our Association; the numerous applications from country Unions have caused us to decide that with the limited number of Nurses at our disposal we would be unable to extend our work if we continued to supply so large a number of Nurses to one Metropolitan Infirmary. Since 1886 we have supplied 100 Nurses to this In-

firmery, and 5 to the Workhouse; 75 of these Nurses were trained by the Association at a cost of £1,500.

In the spring, application was made to the Local Government Board to receive a deputation from the Association on matters relating to the Nursing of the sick in Workhouse Infirmarys. The late President fixed July 2nd for the reception of the deputation, but it had to be postponed owing to the change of Ministry; we hope that it may be received early in 1896.

The following is an extract from a letter written by Mr. Pearce, Master of the Sherborne Workhouse, to the *Western Morning News*, January, 1895:—

"A vacancy occurring for a Nurse here, I became a convert to having a trained one, and I never left a stone unturned until I succeeded in obtaining this, and in August last I had a trained Nurse and certified Midwife appointed from the Workhouse Nursing Association at £30 per annum—we formerly gave £20. It is the best money we have spent for some time, and a boon we highly prize. No one knows outside, let them be ever so wise; one must live with people to know their worth. I have had three acute cases this winter, one of which must have died had it not been for skilled nursing and proper care and treatment."

The following quotation is of interest, from a speech by Mr. Chaplin, President of the Local Government Board, in the House of Commons, on August 27th:—

"Mr. Chaplin admitted that the regrettable cases which had occurred in workhouses of patients suffering from illness owing to inefficient and inferior Nursing ought to receive his careful attention. He had already made enquiries on the subject, and he understood that at the present time there was in existence a Workhouse Nursing Association, by means of which Nurses were trained and also recommended. He understood, moreover, that many Boards of Guardians subscribed to the Association. The Local Government Board attached great importance to the work of the Association, and also to the Nursing duties in workhouses by trained Nurses. It was also the policy of the Board to discourage as far as possible the Nursing of patients by pauper Nurses. This had been the general policy of the Department, and it was one which he hoped to continue to carry out in the future, realising how important it was that the Nursing establishments connected with workhouses should be thoroughly reformed."

### OUR VISITOR'S REPORT.

A round of visits to the Nurses of the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association in country districts brings very forcibly under observation the conditions under which they work, and enforces the conviction that wherever there are sick people there ought to be trained Nurses.

Country Infirmarys vary greatly. In some of the large old-fashioned buildings, the number of Nurses is totally inadequate to the number of patients; and the work is greatly increased by structural inconveniences. The wards may be at a considerable distance from each other, the Nurses having to cross ill-paved yards in all weathers, and the wards for the sick are often mixed up with those for the able-bodied. These troubles are bad enough for the day Nurses, but for the night Nurses, or too often, for the *one night Nurse*, they are tenfold worse. Added to this, the wards are crowded, conveniences and necessaries few, and sanitation bad. Trained Nurses are certainly needed in Infirmarys of this description.

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