

Another feature of Infirmaries is the absolute cleanliness and order in the wards. We are visited periodically and unexpectedly by Inspectors from the Local Government Board, and these gentlemen expect to find an almost impossible state of perfection in every department.

The Probationers receive courses of lectures during the session—October to May—on nursing, physiology, anatomy, elementary medicine and surgery, and hygiene; and at the end of each course an examination is held, and marks awarded. Twice annually a physician, attached to a General Hospital, holds a final written and *viva voce* examination for those Probationers who have completed their three years' training. Those who pass receive a certificate.

In the Kensington Infirmary, the Probationers have regular terms of day and night duty—eight months' day, and four months' night. Night Nurses work under Superintendents, of whom there are two.

The accommodation for the Nurses is good. Each Sister has, of course, a separate bedroom, and Probationers on night duty also. Probationers on day duty sleep in cubicles. There is a general sitting-room for the use of the Sisters, and one for the Probationers. The large dining-hall is used by the whole of the Nursing Staff. Daily and illustrated papers and magazines are provided by the Guardians.

There are attached to some. Infirmaries Midwifery wards, and of these I must say a few words.

A fully qualified Midwife and trained Nurse is in charge, and in our two wards are ten beds in each. The wards have adjacent to them labour room, bath-room, lavatories, and kitchen. They are used in turn; and when the ten beds have been occupied once the ward is closed for fumigation, and thoroughly cleansed before being used again.

All soiled linen, when taken off lying-in cases, is placed in a zinc tank, containing disinfecting solution. The soiled linen, as throughout the Infirmary, is taken to the laundry every morning.

The mattresses in these wards are composed of pine shavings, impregnated with eucalyptus oil, and are renewed after having been used three times. There is an automatic flushing tank in connection with these wards, which flushes all the drains hourly.

The Midwife and her pupils live in a house adjoining the wards, and they do not go into any other part of the Infirmary, nor are other Nurses allowed to visit the maternity department. The Matron makes her daily visit to this section before going to the sick wards, so as to preclude any possibility of conveying contagion.

The term of training for pupils in this special subject is three months, and candidates must be trained Nurses.

I would say one word as to the class of Nurses taken for training in Infirmaries. They are identically the same class as those who go to Hospital. All candidates must be well educated, to enable them to undertake the theoretical work and to pass the examination, without which no Nurse obtains her certificate.

Such are my impressions in respect of Infirmary Nursing and Infirmary Nurses. I have endeavoured to lay before my hearers the chief practical points in connection with these duties, and without making any invidious comparisons between the nursing organisation of General Hospitals and that in Metropolitan Infirmaries. I am convinced that, although we have not yet reached the highest state of perfection, most rapid and salutary changes have been effected during my ten years' experience as Matron in the Metropolis.

"We strive in objects of love
How we may lighten each other's burden
In our share of woe."

DISCUSSION.

At the conclusion of the paper Mrs. Bedford Fenwick remarked that it had been said it was impossible to have a first-class Medical School combined with a first-class Nursing School. One great advantage to Nurses trained in Infirmaries lay in the fact that some portion of the work which in Hospitals to which Medical Schools were attached fell to the students, was done in the Infirmaries by the Nursing staff. An important point arose as to whether the nursing was more efficient where the student took a predominant part, or where most was done by the Nurses. It appeared to her that each system had its own advantage, for the Nurses in General Hospitals gained much by being brought into relation with the newest treatment, and by contact with the leading methods of surgery and medicine. But she could not help agreeing with Miss Hughes, that the nursing of the chronic and helpless cases found in Infirmaries was calculated to bring out some of the best qualities of a Nurse. In General Hospitals it was sometimes said that the smartest-looking Nurse came to the front, while admirable, good, and kind Nurses—without this "smartness"—were apt to be overlooked.

Miss Burgess said in the Birmingham Workhouse Infirmary there was an honorary and a visiting staff of the best local men, who were paid a salary, and who attended daily, so that the Nurses there had the advantages accruing from contact with a visiting staff.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)