

to the plaintiff and his witnesses, seemed to understand what it was, and as he could not then write his name, Rowe made a cross.

The judge, in summing up, said there was a very common custom for people to take in men of this sort with a certain amount of money, and nurse them on the chance of getting something. While he was of opinion that Littleton had acted kindly towards Rowe, the course he had taken was one which could not possibly be encouraged by any court of law. He thought the old man did not understand what the document was, and therefore it could not be considered as of any value as evidence. He thought the justice of the case would be met if he awarded the plaintiff £10 for his services, with costs.

It may be remarked that for the £50 claimed by Littleton for unskilled nursing attendance, William Rowe might have secured the entire services of a fully trained nurse for sixteen weeks. This is reckoning her expenses at £3 a week, in order to include those of board and lodging. We are willing, of course, to accept the learned judge's statement that the plaintiff acted kindly to the deceased, but his conduct to the poor old man on his deathbed appears to us to be absolutely inexcusable.

### The Indian Army Nursing Service.

THE following important article appeared in the *Indian Medical Record* on July 16th, 1897. We refer to it, in another column, this week.

"Ten years will perhaps be considered rather a short period at the end of which the Government should be called upon to consider the desirability or otherwise of the continuance of a public establishment; but in respect of some institutions, even this comparatively short experimental period may be enough to disclose their utility or otherwise, or may be attended with an amplitude of circumstances affording sufficient data to help in arriving at sound conclusions. Among such institutions may be included that (at least as far as this country is concerned) recent organization of 'ministering angels,' who, under the governmental designation of 'Lady Nurses,' have been billeted in the larger station hospitals of the three presidencies for the especial behoof of 'Tommy,' for whose welfare Her Most Gracious Majesty has ever evinced the greatest solicitude. The experiences of the hospitals that have been thus favoured for the past few years should, we think, be sufficient to help in arriving at a solution of the question we wish to propound, viz.: Has the staff of Nursing Sisters proved to be a boon to the sick soldier in India? The question is one of no little importance considered either financially or in its bearings on the health and well-being of the British soldier in

this country; and in deciding it no amount of personal prejudice or individual sentimentality should be allowed to have weight. The author of 'Ingoldsby Legends' might have had sufficient justification for his expression of the opinion that—

'Medical friction beyond all contradiction  
Is far better applied by a *she* than a *he*—

while the cross-grained and love-crossed bachelor may fancy his experiences to amply warrant a sweeping denunciation of the gentler sex in general; but all bare assertions and poetic flights of fancy, whether they be in favour of or against our medical sisterhood, must be eliminated in considering the question, and conclusions must be drawn from reliable records, and statistics obtained from those institutions which have been graced by the presence of these lady helpers. With regard to some hospitals, circumstances have strangely and especially contributed towards facilitating adjudication in this matter; for outbreaks in some corps of enteric and other fevers, in the treatment of which skilled and careful nursing is a *sine qua non*, have afforded opportunities for judging how far the introduction of the lady nursing staff has benefited the soldier in his illnesses in this country. We have the authentic communication that in some corps, embraced in the beneficent influence of the nursing staff, the mortality among enteric cases during the past two or three years has reached astounding percentages. Facts such as these are likely to create a feeling of uncomfatableness not only among the corps which have had the misfortune to afford such records, but also among those whose nursing skill and watchfulness have been attended with such lamentable results. Comparisons of the death rates for the past few years from similar causes, among troops deprived of this sisterly solicitude, and those towards which it has been extended, and the consideration of circumstances which the experience of men qualified to pronounce an opinion may suggest, will help towards the settlement of a subject which has been evoking much commendation from some, and from others unpalatable strictures muffled only by the crushing weight of authority. The opinions, not only of medical officers, but of the British soldiery, in this matter are very much diversified and opposed; and without presuming to say whether the bulk of opinions is in favour or disfavour of the institution, there is no denying the fact that there is a very widespread belief that India will be at least as well without the upkeep of an expensive establishment of questionable utility and benefit. We do not mean to prejudice the opinions of those whose deliberations may have to be turned to this question, nor will we be so ungallant as to make any insinuations or aspersions against the ardour and self-denial of our gentle medical helpmates; but recognizing the strong counter-currents of opinion in a matter so much affecting both our finances and

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)