

for a fund, which may later be turned over to the furtherance of work among the really poor.

The club-house idea is extending among nurses, greatly to the promotion of their comfort when waiting or resting between cases, and of that wider life and interest found in association and co-operation. The Johns Hopkins graduates have their club, and during the present season the graduates of the New York Hospital and of the Presbyterian Hospital have established their club-houses also. The Metropolitan Nurses' Club is a delightful spot, homelike and attractive. The club-house is arrived at so naturally in the course of working out the problem of the private nurses off-duty life, that it seems to be the correct answer to the problem. Few nurses can have any real home life, for but few can live with their families. No doubt the loneliness and isolation of the nurse when, released from her case, she went to her little room, perhaps to be quite solitary for one, two, or more weeks, perhaps to cook her own little meals, perhaps to be worn out and almost ill, has been the hardest part of a life never too easy. Miss Nightingale has written of it as a real danger to the individual, and so to the whole profession at large, in its effect upon character. It was a subject of discussion in the Nursing Congress at the time of the World's Fair, when a layman suggested the foundation of what he called "Spinsteries," as the remedy in sight. From his point of view, naturally enough, the only hope lay in the bestowal of aid by the charitable, and the "Spinsteries" were to be quasi-charitable institutions donated by wealth, where private nurses would live at very cheap rates and under proper supervision and regulations. Needless to say this project was out of harmony with the ideas of the modern self-supporting woman, and nurses have proceeded to work out their own mode of living in a more creditable and comfortable way.

With the telephone came the convenience of grouping together. Six or eight would take a flat, and do their own light housekeeping when at home. Boarding-house keepers specialized, and would either refuse all nurses, or cater especially to them. They required special conveniences, and had customs different from those of the ordinary boarder, so that they did not fit in well together. So one finds, in the large cities, and especially in New York, large houses filled entirely with nurses, as many as thirty or forty in a house. Large rooms will be shared by three or four friends, it rarely happening that all are in at one time; if they are another room will be empty, and a friendly communistic feeling makes the whole house one. Breakfasts and dinners are furnished, and are paid for as they are taken. The club-house develops easily from this arrangement. The Presbyterian nurses simply dispense with their landlady, appoint their committee, elect their housekeeper and general manager from among themselves, and start co-operative housekeeping. No profit is to be made, simply comfort and convenience are to be studied. A common reading or writing room, books and magazines, perhaps special rooms for sick nurses, become features of the house, and the registry naturally locates there, and in time falls under the control of an executive board of nurses. To live successfully an associated life requires a certain amount of education; it is also a great educator, and by these co-operative methods private nurses escape the isolation and narrow ruts into which they would otherwise inevitably fall.

(To be continued.)

Outside the Gates.

SOCIAL QUESTIONS.

SOME faint conception of the wealth of the nation has been possible, even from a casual glance at the shop windows in the West End of London, during Christmas week—a perfect Eldorado of treasure exposed to view; and yet gaunt starvation staring one in the face, just round the corner! No thoughtful woman can be quite happy concerning the national welfare, who sees one child contemptuously prosperous—extravagantly clothed, surfeited with sweets, and weary of toys—and another with gaping scorbutic mouth, hungry for food—starved in soul as well as body. Looking into the heart of things, is it not true that the creed of the Gold God, and of his high priest, Luxury, makes for cruelty? which brings us back to the lavish display in our West End shops—heaped up to overflowing with purple and fine linen, with treasures of silver and gold and precious stones, with the fruits of the earth and savoury meats, all aglow in flames of red and silvery light—so that little greedy, savage souls, in shivering, bony bodies, stand without, and gloat over with red rimmed eyes, and crave for food, raiment, or baubles—as to them seems good—and hate, and hate, and hate! because they are beyond their thievish clutch.

One drenching night, with soaked shoes and dripping umbrella, I stopped to cast an eye over the gorgeous toys in a West End window, with a view to perpetuating the time-honoured fraud of Santa Claus, when I found myself hard pressed by three little urchins, "all tattered and torn," whose pale faces were newly washed white by nature's kindly tears. All three were flattening their noses against the window pane.

By-and-bye No. 1 peered round insinuatingly and said: "S'pose as how that downy ole bloke, Daddy Christmas, was to come along, and he was to say, says 'e, 'All these 'ere presens is mine for good little boys and gals, what 'ud yer selec-lidy?"

"None on yer kedging, Billy Big Eyes, or the copper will be arter yer," says No. 2.

"'E ain't a kedging," says No. 3. "We knows a lidy when we meets 'er, don't we Big Eyes? and s'elp me if she ain't Daddy Christmas's ole dutch, as is able and willin', I know, to touch that thar winder wi' 'er goden wand, and sperrit away that thar 'box o' sojers for me, and them cracks for yer, and them roaring lions for Bill, and nobody any the wiser."

And, the idea being popular, three little rag-bags twirl themselves round and dance wondrous capers on the dripping flags, to a hearty chorus of "She's a lidy, s'elp me bob."

During the performance of these antics I dive into the shop and speedily return with three brown paper parcels, two of which I give to Nos. 2 and 3, who, with a final whoop and splash through muddy puddles, duck under horses' heads and hoofs, and are soon lost to view in misty fog.

Billy Big Eyes awaits his turn.

"Before you take this parcel tell me exactly how you feel when you flatten your nose against that window-pane?" I question.

"Don't feel nuffing," he answers, surlily.

"Honour bright, Billy?" I question, still withholding the box.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)