

nursing. She must also have learned to know her own limitations and the necessity of calling in the doctor.

If this last piece of knowledge be necessary in casual illnesses, it is of vital importance in confinements. The ghastly record of 100,000 mothers of Great Britain who within ten or twelve years have died in the natural operation of childbearing (35 deaths daily is another verified statement), and of the enormous number of persons blind from birth whose sufferings were caused by ignorant mismanagement, mark the holocaust of murdered and living victims laid daily at the shrine of the Goddess of Ignorance by the untrained Gamps of the country. The metaphor is a fitting one to use, for some of the ancient customs of treatment at birth can be nothing but fossil remains of dim pagan survivals. I fail to trace the meaning of lifting up the new-born babe to hang in the air by its heels; but what can the custom of rubbing its face, eyes, and nostrils, over with soot be, but a haunting influence of the dread which the terrible fates of Niobe's children, and that destined for Cassiope's daughter Andromeda, inspired in mothers, prompting them to hide their children's beauty from the eyes of the jealous gods? Both these customs, with others equally pernicious, still survive in English villages.

It is to save the lives and eyesight of the babies, and to prevent the sacrifice of the lives and health of the mothers, that this movement of providing Maternity Nurses for the rural districts is being urged forward with so much force nowadays. If this effort is to be established on a solid, permanent basis, and organised on a comprehensive scale, it must take the form of County Associations. It is worth every effort to try to persuade the rulers of the County Council to take Nursing up as one of the objects which they encourage and develop. Their patronage promotes the training of these nurses more effectually, and secures the management of the Association more capably, than that of any other governing body. For this reason I would urge on the pioneer spirits of any County which is about to start a system of Rural District Nursing, to do everything in their power to obtain from the outset the help and support of their County Council.

Fourteen County Councils promote Nursing—viz. those of Bedford, Cornwall, Derbyshire, Dorset, Essex, Hampshire, three in Lincolnshire, Northumberland, Nottinghamshire, Suffolk, Sussex, and Yorkshire. They help by grants drawn from the funds devoted to Technical Education; and as the money thus granted is limited in its application to purposes of instruction, it is given in Nursing Scholarships and in grants for Lectures delivered by the nurses. (It cannot be given for the salaries of nurses, or maintenance of Nurses' Homes, etc.)

£820 was expended in twenty-eight Nursing Scholarships by nine County Councils during 1897.

The Nursing Scholarships, averaging about £30 or £35, are bestowed on selected candidates belonging to the county, to be held at approved Training Hospitals, Infirmarys, and Homes. A fully trained nurse, whose minimum qualification is one year's general hospital or infirmary training (where there is a resident medical staff) followed by six months' district training, can earn a salary of £60 to £90 per annum. This nurse's training is sufficient to qualify her for the position of a Queen's Nurse; but the impossibility of raising this sum in most rural districts makes it necessary to employ a second class of nurse—namely, village nurses and certificated midwives, trained for at least six months in a district, such as those trained at Plaistow or the Clapham Maternity Hospital, etc. These nurses' salaries vary from £35 to £50 per annum. They have received thorough training in their work as maternity nurses, having on an average handled about a hundred mothers and babies during the training.

If the County Council assists the Nursing Association by grants of scholarships for training the nurses, the Association is thereby relieved of a great burden. Subscriptions will still be needed for subsidiary expenses: the nurses' uniforms, the salary of the Inspecting Superintendent, and of a supplementary nurse who shall help in emergencies and epidemics, a Nurses' Home of Rest and Provident Fund, and occasionally for grants to poor villages towards initial expenses of first installing a nurse, and towards providing bicycles, etc.

If the promoters of Nursing Associations for Rural Districts are unable to win the support of their County Councils, they will still do well to establish their association on a county basis. The advantages of a County Federation of the various Nursing Associations include:—

1.—The drawing from a wide area a supply of suitable candidates to be trained in nursing, and a proper supervision of this training.

2.—The keeping a registry of nurses trained for country work, and providing a supply of nurses for emergency work—viz. holidays, outbreaks of illness, sudden departure of a nurse—and arranging where desirable for an interchange of nurses.

3.—The promoting the development of the District Nursing system in the county, without in any way interfering with the constitution, liberty of action, rules, or finances, of any local federated association.

4.—The maintenance of an Inspecting Superintendent (as required in the terms of affiliation of County Associations, by the Queen's Jubilee Institute), who shall visit the local associations, giving advice, information, and encouragement.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)