

### The Best Means of Providing and Training Nurses for the Indoor Poor.\*

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That immense trouble would be involved in the development of the details of such schemes, that the initial cost might be high, that there would be many prejudices and obstacles of one kind and another to overcome, is unquestionable. But that reform is a necessity is as unquestionable. Would the schemes suggested make for the necessary reform?

It is almost impossible within the limits of a paper so large and general in its subject to enter into details—details calling for the consideration of experts, candid and reasonable men and women, who will bring a large and generous perception to bear on the condition and possibilities of the nursing of the sick poor in the Workhouse Infirmary.

The problem has to be faced. It should be faced boldly, and it would be if the hearts of all Guardians and Poor Law authorities could be stirred by the thought of the sick, the lonely neglected sick, who spend their lives within the same walls day after day, year after year, tended often by selfish, careless, uninterested hands, here to-day and gone to-morrow, free to flee the monotony which must be endured by the sufferers, perhaps but ill in the early days, but bound to them by the cords of pain and helplessness.

Do the suggestions embodied in this paper meet the difficulties of the existing state of affairs? Would not a definite and recognised system of training elevate the status of nurses, raise the whole tone of the profession, and would not the minor difficulties of the place and treatment generally of the Workhouse Infirmary nurse disappear?

To consider the causes of the minor difficulties would be very instructive, and if what may be called the patchwork policy is to remain a force, unquestionably such consideration might result in the modification of existing errors, if not in their removal.

It is a very significant fact that most of the Local Government Board Inspectors in their yearly reports to the Local Government Board dismiss the subject of the condition of the hospitals and the nursing of the sick in their districts in a short generalising paragraph.

The reports of Mr. Bagenal, Mr. Baldwin Fleming, and Mr. Preston Thomas are the exceptions. Mr. Bagenal pleads for a better type of woman as well as nurse, of women worthy to be classed with Miss Nightingale. But he must remember that Miss Nightingale was exceptional

in her day and generation, and that her work was done in exceptionally stirring times. There are women of equally noble type to be found to-day taking "the daily round the common task," and making them glorious. But because it is the "daily round the common task" with no environment of exceptional circumstances, the greatness of character and work are overlooked in the press of a commonplace community.

Many Unions find a great difficulty in getting nurses. To take a typical case. The Clerk to the Chipping Norton Guardians reported that he had advertised for an assistant nurse at a salary of £26, and for a certificated nurse, at a salary of £30. To the former he received no reply; to the latter, one from an unsuitable person. The advertisements were inserted in the local and county papers. Let it be well remembered that the best class of nurse looks for professional advertisements in a professional paper, and not in local and county papers.

Would not the appointment of women inspectors—trained nurses, women of the best type, and possessing critical and suggestive faculty—mean a better understanding of the errors of the present system; would not the weakness and the strength be more accurately gauged, and, as a result, improvements suggested and effected? Detailed knowledge of the general existing conditions is necessary before permanent reform can be achieved.

Miss Julian, Matron of the Croydon Workhouse Infirmary, pointed out in the paper she read at the General Meeting of the London and District Poor Law Officers' Association last month, that the position of the small infirmary nurse is very lonely compared with the life of her fellow nurse in the small general hospital, and lacks the relief of sympathy and change brought by the interest the outside world takes in the hospital nurse. The monotony of the daily life and the isolation have a depressing tendency on the average nurse. Isolation means to so great an extent helplessness.

A nurse leaves her training school to take up work in a small isolated Workhouse Infirmary. She finds the convenient, well-planned sick wards replaced by inconvenient, unsuitable accommodation. The supply of the materials essential for the proper performance of her duties inadequate and absent. The manual help required equally inadequate or absent. The work of her training school was well organised—she finds a lack of organisation and a slackness of administration. And let it be emphasised that the maladministration of the Workhouse is a leaden weight of depression on the spirits of many enthusiastic capable women. The letter of the law may be kept, but the spirit is lacking.

In the training school the material comfort of the nurse was considered. She now finds her quarters less comfortable. She worked the defin-

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