

Poor-Law Nursing Notes.

WE are glad to observe that the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association is reanimated with activity. In no branch of nursing is there greater need of organization and help than in the wards of workhouses. The present condition of many of these places is in sad need of reform. Even in the well appointed Poor Law Infirmarys very few of them are as efficiently nursed as the general hospitals, because the number of nurses and probationers allotted per bed is far below the number utilised in a well appointed hospital, and work cannot be well done by over-worked women.

Many excellent suggestions for reforming the system of Poor Law Infirmary Nursing have been brought forward by experienced Infirmary Matrons during the past year, and one suggestion that the larger institutions should train for the smaller, is to be tried at the Birmingham Infirmary.

The Workhouse Infirmary Management Committee have made the following recommendation: "That the present plan of training nurses be discontinued as soon as possible, and that, in lieu thereof, the training be limited to probationers sent from the Workhouse Nursing Association only, the number not to exceed ten at any period; that the fee for training be £20 in each case for the first year, and that for the second year such probationers continue to be trained without any further fee from them, or any salary paid to them by the Guardians." In moving its adoption, Mr. H. J. Manton argued that the proposed arrangement was much more advantageous than the one that previously obtained. By adopting it the Board would be helping smaller institutions, and would be benefiting themselves. At the end of the second year the probationers would have acquired such a degree of proficiency in nursing that they would be competent to do their work properly—in a way that those who had only received a year's training under the old system could not do. Mr. Page seconded the resolution, which Mr. Smith supported, remarking that the nurses when trained would be able to render great service to the smaller unions. Mr. Robertson thought the training of nurses was an important matter, which should commend itself to the Local Government Board. It was a question of national importance, and, rather than leave workhouses to train nurses for other institutions, the Local Government Board should take the matter in hand themselves. It was wrong in principle that the ratepayers of this parish should be taxed to train nurses for

other institutions. Mr. Manton pointed out that in addition to receiving a fee for the first year from the probationers, the Infirmary Committee had the benefit of their services. The proposal to deal with the question nationally involved training schools, and although at various conferences he had heard arguments on the question, he had never heard the people who argued on it come to any definite conclusion as to how it should be carried out. The proposal submitted by the Committee was a distinct improvement on the practice that had previously obtained, inasmuch as they would be getting efficient service and doing considerable good in the way of providing nurses, without any cost to the ratepayers, for smaller workhouses and infirmaries, instead of for associations which provided nurses, or of creating nurses who undertook nursing purely as a vocation. The resolution was then put to the meeting and carried.

We are entirely in favour of a National Poor Law Nursing Service, and hope Mr. Robertson will take steps to give publicity to his views. We are of opinion that there are now many able and experienced Matrons who have organized excellent schools of nursing under the Poor Law who are in sympathy with this view; but to discuss this special work in a large Conference of Poor Law Guardians is not calculated to advance the question in its initial stage.

A lengthy communication has been sent out by the Workhouse Nursing Association to certain Boards of Guardians pointing out that the question of its continuance had been under consideration, and it was being urged by its promoters that the necessity for its existence was as great as ever. They wished to know (1) whether the Board had up to the present time met with any difficulty in procuring an adequate supply of competent and fully-trained nurses, (2) To what cause or causes did they attribute it, (3) What steps they would suggest to meet the difficulty, and (4) did they think it desirable that a central fund should be established to train nurses under the Poor Law, and, if practicable, would they be prepared to assist such a fund.

When discussed by the Chippenham Board of Guardians, some very interesting and instructive remarks were elicited:—The Chairman said the Association had certainly done a great deal of good in the past, and it might do so in the future, but they must remember that it was a voluntary Association, and as such ought to be outside of any official support. Rev. H. B. Bardwell said the present excellent condition of their infirmary was due to the assistance they

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)