

Nurses' Social Settlements.*

By MISS WALD.

THE movement known as the "Settlement movement" has been so generally noted and discussed during the past few years that I hardly think the gathering to-day need be reminded of its inception and history. It may not be amiss, however, to restate what the settlement stands for is a social expression of the times in so far as its aims have crystallized or its principles been formulated.

Primarily we may claim that a "Settlement" stands for an opportunity for different elements of society to know each other and to find again those common ties that may fasten the bonds of mutual interest and mutual responsibilities.

Even in this so-called land of democracy social groups have developed into class groups, the rich and favoured keeping to themselves and in the greed of possession allowing the slum, the tenement house life and all that it implies—to develop with them.

Now, there are not many who would have willingly allowed the creation of this state, for with class distinctions come class misconceptions, mistrusts, hates and the ugly followers of poverty and sordid lives; therefore it does not seem strange that with this social injustice there should come the smart of the pricked consciences and action therefrom.

Into the life that seemed to him shows the greatest need, first stepped the valiant young university man of England (1885). He took up his abode in the "slum" of his great capital and tried to learn from its denizens where the sore was, where the oppression, and hoped—if nothing more—to express to them and for them the sense of *his* desire for the universal brotherhood, and thereby he inaugurated a "Settlement."

That desire the early church felt too, but has not kept so clearly before it as the single creed of love and light (knowledge) became complicated with form and theology, and the new conscience—that is, the social conscience awakened—seems almost to be a new message. Now the desire to know, to participate in the affairs of a social world, means the social life in its midst, and thus you see groups of people taking up their residence in parts of the cities that give them this new opportunity, not relinquishing their older ties, not uniting the two, but throwing their best efforts into new connection.

It is not easy to make genuine close social ties in any strange place, and the sincerest efforts of the sincerest people have often difficulty in

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finding an expression of their meaning, sometimes the small achievement mocking the high desire; but if this desire has entered into the heart of the nurse, she has the readiest opportunity in her profession.

She has so many advantages over other men and women of altruistic yearnings, that she ought to count effectively, as a link of restored belief and faith, in the new social order of more fairly adjusted opportunities that we optimistically look forward to.

Nurses, therefore, who have the desire to throw their profession, their social ardour into a service of the people, need have no difficulty in finding outlet for them. A democratic, neighbourly, simple relationship is open to them in the "Settlement"—not a mission work as we have grown to understand that term—not as a means to persuade one set of people to believe as you do, but a frank avowal of relationship, a willingness, a zeal to serve where poverty augments the misfortune of disease and then to hope for and to seize the opportunities of building upon this opening—a relationship for future intercourse.

The nursing itself is what is probably familiar to you as district nursing—that is, the nurse does not remain continuously with one patient, but divides her day among several, going from one to the other; but the residence of the nurse in the social settlement being known to her patients, calls can be received and returned and part can be taken in the club, the class and educational programme that is bound to grow in and about a settlement. These features will increase according to the number and ability of the settlement family and their attractive powers to the people of their neighbourhood—so have the boys' and girls' clubs, the dancing classes, debating societies, basket ball teams, penny provident bank, domestic science classes, kindergartens, and so forth, grown as the needs and wishes of a neighbourhood been felt naturally from the knowledge and influence of nurse and patient. Naturally the nurse does not care for the sick all day and manage clubs all evening, but she will desire some share in it; her interest will be in them all and she will have such all round concern in her patients, the definite details of their personality will be so well known to her and she will find in the atmosphere of her home and a ready response to bring them into it to prove the neighbourliness of the house and all that that implies.

If all this sounds alluring to you, satisfying and stimulating, you are a nurse for a Settlement.

What could well be more alluring? The life is an ideal one.

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