

Thousands of them—the eye ached with trying to follow them as they glided noiselessly up and down, as only the Hindu knows how to glide. Now it was a young girl, poisoning her beggar's bowl on her head, returning from the river, and, pausing a moment on a step, a perfect picture in deep orange. Now an old man, tottering with a stick, his only garment a loin-cloth, but with a few marigolds in his hands, an offering to Mother Gunga. Each and all had one idea in mind, that of purifying their souls in the Ganges.

It is nothing written down! But the beauty of it all; the whole place seemed to be teeming with the traditions of ages. We passed the Burning Ghâts, where Hindus are burnt after death; those fortunate enough to be cremated in this way are sure of everlasting happiness, as no harm can come to the soul within sight of the sacred river.

Most of the buildings are Hindu. But there is one very fine Mahomedan mosque, built, I believe, by the Mógul Emperor Aurenzeb; it has two fine minarets, one of which we were allowed to ascend, from whence we had a magnificent view of the city. When we descended we came across two of the most horrible-looking Fakirs (holy men); one was seated on a bed of nails, reading out of a sacred book. He was evidently laying up a store of glory for himself. He gave us the most murderous look; it was blood-curdling. I shall never forget it. The second one seemed more comfortable; he was sitting cross-legged, but seemed fairly at ease; indeed, he looked too fat to be very saintly. He also threw us a nasty look. All along the river we saw men prostrating themselves before the sun.

After resting through the heat of the day, we again drove to the Ganges, where the Maharajah's state barge had been placed at our disposal. We were taken across the river to his palace, which looked like an enchanted place in the glowing afternoon light. When we reached the palace steps we found a most gorgeous-looking functionary arrayed in crimson and gold—very dirty—waiting for us. He looked too superior for any human occupation, so I suggested that we should fall at his feet and apologise for our existence! The others, however, rather objected to my idea, so we just passed on and tried to appear at our ease, an ease which we were far from feeling.

In the courtyard we found a Royal tusker, and were smilingly invited to take a ride. A fearsome joy! However, "no Briton's to be baulked," so we balanced ourselves on the howdah and tried to look as if a ride on an elephant were an everyday occurrence. He was a huge beast, and as his feet rose and fell we experienced a sensation not unlike "sea-sickness." And, although we all felt the importance of the situation whilst on his back, we were more serene in body and mind when we once more touched the earth.

We boarded our barge again, and went down the Ganges just as the moon began to show above the trees. The night came down suddenly, as it always does in the East. One by one the stars came out, and the sapphire of the sky showed more intense. The temples gleamed like the dwelling-places of fairies in the moonlight. That gentle light toned down any tawdiness or ugliness that might exist in the day, it spread a quiet and holy calm over everything. Even the Ganges looked more solemn, and away up in the peerless Eastern sky the silent stars looked down on the little lives of men.

M. L. R.

## Professional Review.

### THE INCIDENTAL OPPORTUNITIES OF DISTRICT NURSING.

Those who have a high ideal of the standard which should be attained by a district nurse will be interested in two little pamphlets on this subject published by the Women's Printing Society, Ltd., 66 and 68, Whitcomb Street, W.C., price 3d. One, "The Incidental Opportunities of District Nursing," is by Miss M. Loane, Superintendent of District Nurses, Portsmouth, the other containing two articles, "The District Nurse as Health Missioner," by Miss Loane, and "Dormant Sanitary Legislation," by Miss Helen G. Bowers. The first-mentioned pamphlet opens with the quotation from *Ecce Homo*:—"The obligation of philanthropy is for all ages, but if we consider the particular modes of philanthropy which Christ prescribed to His followers we shall find that they were suggested by the special conditions of the age. The same spirit of love which dictated them, working in this age upon the same problems, would find them utterly insufficient; no man who loves his kind can in these days rest content with waiting as a servant upon human misery, when it is in so many cases possible to anticipate and avert it."

It is the special province of the district nurse to anticipate and avert human misery and sickness, and for this reason she, of all the members of the nursing profession, should have trained intelligence of a high order. For this reason the woman of the labouring classes taken from her home, given a smattering of nursing for a few months, and then sent back to "nurse" in her own village or countryside, can never be an ideal nurse. She has all the superstitions, all the prejudices of her class, and these will by no means be eradicated in three months or even more. We therefore agree with Miss Loane, who, after summing up the opportunities which come to the district nurse, says:—

"The nurse should be familiar with the best books on sociology, and should make a point of reading the social articles in the leading newspapers and reviews.

"The reasons why none but highly-trained nurses, who are at the same time women of culture and worldly experience, should be employed in district work may easily be gathered from the preceding pages, but we will briefly recapitulate them.

"A nurse's first and one of her most important duties is to alleviate suffering that is unavoidable, and to prevent the needless aggravations of neglect and ignorance. How is it possible for a woman of three or six months' training to know anything but the barest elements of her profession? How is it possible for a woman without culture, tact, or experience of life, noiselessly to impose her will upon free agents? When the wealthier classes are animated with the desire to help the suffering poor, we cannot do wrong in asking them to make their gift a royal one. It is hardly too much to say that the gift of an incompetent nurse is worse than useless."

In "The District Nurse as a Health Missioner," Miss Loane asserts that "One of the most frequent causes of permanent ill-health among poor women is having to do hard work which is either excessive in amount or occurs at times when they are physically unfit for it. One of the reasons for this is that so few boys in England are brought up to take any part in housework. In America, in all servantless house-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)