

County Nursing Associations.

The County Nursing Associations, affiliated with the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute, are now undertaking a considerable amount of work amongst the poor in the country districts, so, being desirous to place before the readers of this journal some account of their work and its scope, we applied for information to Miss Amy Hughes, the energetic and capable Superintendent of these Associations, who kindly furnished us with the following particulars:—

The County Associations were founded to meet the needs of the rural districts. The earliest mention of the employment of trained nurses "to work amongst the poor in their own homes" is found in the records of St. John's House, Norfolk Street, Strand, founded in 1848, and whose nurses at that time received their training chiefly in the homes of the poor.

The organised district nursing of the poor dates, however, from 1860, when trained hospital nurses with special training in district work were first employed in Liverpool. In 1868 the East London Nursing Association was founded and in 1874 the Metropolitan and National Nursing Association. From that time onwards the work spread, but was performed chiefly by nurses working in isolated centres, mostly in towns.

In 1887 the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses was founded by her late Majesty Queen Victoria, and by this means the work of district nursing, instead of being dependent on individual effort, became a great national institution. Since that time there has been a large increase in the number of district workers, and trained hospital nurses, known as Queen's Nurses, are employed all over the country. Nevertheless, the question of expense, and to some extent the want of regular employment, soon created a difficulty in providing these nurses for the rural districts.

Experience proves that a trained nurse can command a salary of from £30 to £45 a year, as well as the cost of her maintenance, in an institution or when working in private families. Thus an equivalent sum—namely, from £80 to £100—must be raised for the support of a Queen's Nurse. There are large tracts in this country where, owing to the scanty population and to the absence of wealthy residents, it is impossible to raise this amount. It is sometimes thought that the Jubilee Institute might partially support the nurses in such districts, but its Charter confers no powers to expend the funds of the Institute in this way; they are intended to be devoted to education.

In 1891 the first County Nursing Association, that of Lincolnshire, came into existence. The intention is to secure suitable women, natives of the county, for the work required, and to give them

a course of training in maternity work and home nursing, after which they are expected to return to the country villages and work for the average wage of the labourers of the district in return for their training. They also receive uniform. The remuneration may appear trifling, but Miss Hughes points out that these nurses are of the people, and live as they do, in Norfolk on dumplings, in Cornwall on pasties. They can, as a rule, obtain board and lodging for 10s. a week, which leaves them 4s. or 5s. a week for incidental expenses. The County Councils, through grants from their technical education committees, have given substantial help towards training expenses, and this is supplemented by subscriptions from donors in the county. All affiliated Associations are inspected by the Superintendent of County Associations appointed by the Queen's Jubilee Institute.

The women employed receive a full midwifery training, not that they may in any way act in competition with medical practitioners, but to ensure a thorough knowledge of the work on their part. It frequently happens that the doctor when summoned is unable to attend, and the management of the case consequently devolves on the nurse in attendance. In justice to the mother and child she must be able to meet the emergencies which may arise.

In regard to general nursing, they are taught the principles of first aid and home nursing sufficiently to enable them to attend chronic cases. There is no pretence at assuming that these women are trained nurses. They are registered midwives with first-aid knowledge. The employment of these village nurses is only sanctioned by the Queen's Institute in rural districts where it is impossible to support a Queen's Nurse and the population of the district does not as a rule exceed 3,000, or in a district where a Queen's Nurse is already employed and where special conditions make it desirable that a village nurse, also, should be employed under her direction. To ensure the work of these nurses being kept up to a certain standard the Queen's Institute requires that, in connection with all affiliated associations, there shall be a County Superintendent who must be a fully-qualified nurse and a registered midwife. The Institute makes a grant towards her maintenance of £50 per annum.

The County Superintendent, who is engaged by and subject to the Central County Committee, superintends *all* the nurses connected with the Queen's Jubilee Institute in the county, whether Queen's or village nurses. She organises new associations and arranges for the training of candidates, subject to the approval of the Central Committee. She is in constant touch with the nurses, sees their books, supervises their work, and out of her wider experience and knowledge is able to supervise and assist them. The County Associations also give district or midwifery training to

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