

The School-Nurse.

By MACK ALL.

Armed with a note-book, pencil, and diminutive bag, I began my work for the Educational Board.

My colleague—under whose wing I was—gave me some advice as to time. To arrive at a school before nine-thirty, meant that prayers were not over, or the roll called; and so by going early the teachers work for the day was disorganised. To begin later than nine-thirty, would mean that a large school could not all be visited in a morning.

Arrived at the Infants' Department we entered a class-room that seemed crowded with babies. I heard myself introduced as "the new school-nurse." In a moment, forty small boys stood at attention, forty little hands, palms outwards, touched two score brows, and a chorus of shrill voices cried "Good-morning ma'am."

The "Principal" extended a hand, the "Assistant" bowed, and I was known henceforth as the school-nurse, or more commonly as "The Nurse what comes to our School." My companion exchanged a few words with the teachers about the prevalence of measles among the children. She then entered her week's visits to the children's homes, and the result in the Medical Officers' book.

Meanwhile I was being scrutinised by the youngsters, and when nurse opened her bag to get a bandage for a chilblain "gone wrong" all the eyes in the room turned to my bag. I asked them softly to guess what my bag contained. I helped them with suggestions—whistles, marbles, tops, and string. As nurse finished her work I remarked that "bags were made to be filled with sweets and toys." There was an abortive laugh, a look towards the teacher whose back was turned, then such a deep sigh, a broad grin, and the chicks' hearts were won. The children in that room were happy and healthy, thanks probably to a teacher who believed in good fires and open windows.

In the next room the children were a little older, and the room was both cold and close. Here there were several discharging ears, a case of ophthalmia, and a fresh ringworm. The two latter weresent home, and told that nurse would see their mother by and bye. The four hundred infants having been seen, the next visit was to the girls' department. In one class there were several unclean heads, the inevitable broken chilblain, a finger crushed in a door, a girl who felt ill after drill, and a "hang nail" into which dirt and ink had penetrated.

Some names were entered in the Doctor's

book; a few girls were given advice, and two or three were told to come to the Nurses' Institute after school, and have their sores dressed. In other rooms several girls wished to consult nurse about stiff joints, or headache, and there was a case of sore throat and a temperature of 102 deg., which was promptly sent home, with a note asking her mother to let a doctor see the girl at once.

The boys' department is at the top of the building, and nurse having reached it pushed open the first door, but before her nose was inside the room, a voice called out, "There is nothing for you here to-day, nurse." Feeling like a beggar that has been refused alms, we moved away, with a remark about joining the unemployed, and a "good morning" to the teacher, who is young and probably very shy.

In the next room things are different, it is fashionable to consult the Nurse here. The teacher asked all those who wished to speak to nurse to hold up their hands. There was a great show of hands and afterwards a march past of the weak, the lazy, the partially blind, and the very lame. The first patient cannot sleep, he does not state when; the next is never hungry; there are several with scratches on their hands, and a few with bruises on their heels. The teacher helps the nurse by giving reasonable advice to the boys, about weekly baths and early suppers. One by one, they return to their place satisfied for the time, but at the nurse's next visit they file out again with the same old complaints. Only the long holidays will cure the "chronics" in this class, where wounds and bruises are things to be proud of.

After the school comes the visits to the homes. In most cases the children have taken a printed slip with directions prepared by the Educational Board, about treatment, &c., for the trouble that has caused them to be sent home. In the first home called at, the mother opens the door with this slip in one hand, and in the other the boy who brought it.

"Oh, I knows all about ringworm" she says, by way of greeting, "Bless yuur 'eart nuss, I am the mother of ten, and this is the last of the lot to git the ringworm; I don't 'old with keepin' them apart, I uses the same towel for them hall, for I knows that, if they are to git it, they will git it, and I don't 'old with fightin' Providence. I 'ave been usin' the same comb for this one as for the rest, but I knows how to cure 'im, I 'ave put on plenty of hink and tobacco hash, the rest are gettin' on a treat with that, I 'ave been usin' it for twelve months now."

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