

## Our Foreign Letter.

### THE SOCIAL SERVICE NURSE.



All hospital nurses have sometimes grieved when a patient whom they have watched through a critical illness has

been discharged cured—relatively cured, that is—for every acute illness leaves the sufferer with a lowered opsonic index, and they dread the result when the indulged patient of the ward returns home to fight the battle of life with increased disabilities, after a brief stay, perhaps, in a convalescent home.

In the United States a new step has been taken with the view of helping the patients in their own homes, and dealing with the conditions which retard recovery or cause illness.

The Bellevue Hospital has with so much success maintained a "Social Service Nurse" (Miss Wadley) for the last year, that three other hospitals have already appointed similar officers.

Some account of the movement may be of interest to English nurses, as, so far, in England I do not think the Social Service Nurse is known.

Considered from an economic standpoint alone the Social Service Nurse has been found to represent a saving to the hospitals which far exceeds the salary paid her. In the Vanderbilt Clinic, where she was introduced last January, through the efforts of Dr. Linsly R. Williams, she is considered indispensable.

"It is simply a question of having such a visitor or sending hundreds of patients away without being able to do anything for them," says Dr. Williams. "We treat 45,000 cases in a year, and about 125 every day. It will easily be seen that the physicians have no time to listen to the stories of patients and advise them how to overcome the social conditions which stand in the way of their recovery.

"Again, we often hear of doctors in clinics telling a patient to stop his work; to take a vacation; to take the baths of Michigan; all of which are impossible for the patient to obtain. Another common thing is for a physician to tell a man suffering from neuritis of the arm, contracted through some such trade as that of presser in a tailor's shop, to change his work. It is easy to tell a man to do this, and quite another thing for the man in question to find other employment.

#### *Where the Social Worker Comes In.*

"Here is where the social worker comes in. She is able to obtain through various agencies the aid needed. For instance, our social visitor has found light employment for about twenty-four men suffering from neuritis of the arm. From this her services have extended to every class of patient, down to the babies, twenty-four of whom were sent

away for a week at the seashore only yesterday through her offices."

Dr. Alice Farnham Leader, the social service visitor for the clinic, is enthusiastic over the work.

"The men who have contracted neuritis of the arm in heavy labour are some of the most difficult cases to help," she says. "These men are usually illiterate and unskilled except in their one trade. It is often impossible to find anything at all for them to do which will not bring the crippled arm into service.

"When this is the case it becomes necessary to turn your attention to the family of which the man is the wage earner and to find work for the mother and perhaps one or two of the children. Often, through ignorance of how to start out, such families have sold their household goods and sunk to a state of absolute destitution before the wage earner was able to return to his trade, and the worry and starvation have necessarily retarded his recovery.

"The relief demanded by the patients is of every description. Not long ago an old woman who had undergone a serious operation in a hospital came here for after treatment. Her illness had incapacitated her for cleaning, with which she had formerly supported herself, and she was in dread of having to go to the almshouse. We arranged for her to support herself by taking lodgers and doing sewing.

"Quite different was the case of a young man who came here to be treated for heart disease, the result of late hours and drink. He told me he associated with bad people because he didn't know any good ones. We arranged better associations for him. As a result the boy has changed his life and completely recovered his health.

"Sometimes people come here, the victims of stomach troubles which are due to poor food or bad cooking at home. When this is the case I obtain cooking lessons for the mother of the family. Home instruction in hygiene of all kinds is obtained for families where lack of knowledge on such points is found to be responsible for the illness of the children or others."

#### *The Department at Bellevue.*

When the department for convalescent relief was started in Bellevue a year ago it was the only work of its kind officially connected with a hospital in New York city, and one of the first instances in this country of the practical recognition of a hospital's responsibility for its patients other than in giving them purely medical or surgical aid.

In the first year of the work just ended 1,453 cases came to the new department for help of some kind. The nurse in charge of its convalescent relief work is one of the busiest women in the city. In the year she made 1,332 visits to the wards, and received 696 visits from patients.

Many pathetic stories would never be known but for the nurse in charge of the relief work. In May, for instance, word was brought to her that a Hungarian woman in one of the wards seemed

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