

as little red tape as if, like the private nurse, she were to remain with the one patient continuously.

#### PRIVATE NURSING.

By Miss E. M. ROBERTS,

*Late Lady Superintendent, Nurses' Co-operation.*

Miss Roberts said that sixty years ago our parents and grandparents were only accustomed to call in the help of the "trained nurse" when a birth or death was imminent, but now few illnesses, and practically no operations are carried through without the services of one or two nurses being obtained.

Miss Roberts then described the various ways in which a qualified nurse is able to find employment in private duty nursing in the United Kingdom. She may work entirely on her own account. She can attach herself to one medical man (usually a surgeon), who keeps her constantly employed—not an advisable arrangement. Most nurses, therefore, find it expedient to join one of the many associations which provide their members with patients. Many hospitals have a private nursing staff attached, in connection with which the nurses receive a salary varying from £30 to £60 per annum, and are boarded between their cases.

Many private institutions exist merely as commercial speculations. Uncertificated, inexperienced, nurses sometimes swell the staffs, and for this reason nurses should exercise caution in joining unknown establishments.

The most popular and fairest way of finding employment for the wage-earning nurse is the co-operation system, and the first society on these lines was the Nurses' Co-operation. In 1891 a few nurses joined together to set up an office for themselves, and obtained the support of several influential surgeons and physicians, who clearly recognised the injustice of exploiting trained nurses as a means of money making for the hospitals to which they belonged.

As for the qualities desirable in nurses who undertake private duty, in addition to having professional competence it is important that they should be nice women who will fit in well with the ways of a household. They also need to be many-sided, as a knowledge of foreign languages, musical skill, and business capacity in managing a household are often asked for; therefore, the better educated a woman is the easier it is for her to command the best kind of work.

In conclusion, Miss Roberts said that a nurse should set before her an ideal other and higher than that of making money or achieving material comfort, not losing sight of the fact that she is serving the sick, that she goes forth to set her patient at rest in mind and body, and that her work is one that calls for self-denial and self-sacrifice, remembering that by her actions the whole army of private nurses is either blessed or condemned.

#### Discussion.

OPENED BY THE LADY HERMIONE BLACKWOOD,  
*Queen's Nurse.*

In opening the discussion, Lady Hermione Blackwood said she proposed to confine her remarks to district nursing and its effects in Ireland, where conditions prevail totally unlike those to be found in any other country.

It is always said that the Irish people have a wonderful affinity to the French. Both nations are accredited with the same charm of manner and gaiety of heart, but, as district nurses know, the conditions under which people live in one locality in the same country are often totally unlike those to be found in another, and these differences must be more accentuated still between one country and another, where climate, geographical features, and past history have influenced the habits and customs and standards of the people.

In order to bring before the Conference the problems confronting the district nurse in certain parts of Ireland, the speaker described a district on the West Coast where the extremes of poverty and low civilisation exist. Nothing meets the eye for mile after mile but treeless bog and stones; it might almost be believed that in some past day it rained stones on this land.

Here thirty or forty miles away from the nearest railway, the superstitions and beliefs which melt away before advancing civilisation keep a hold on these imaginative people, often proving a formidable obstacle in the way of the district nurse. Thus it is embarrassing for the nurse to find that in order to hoodwink the fairies it is necessary wholly to ignore the coming baby, and that neither allusion to its advent nor the slightest preparation for its reception can possibly be permitted, and that it is not till the child is seen to be living that the assembled neighbours are allowed to commence the two little garments that constitute an Irish baby's outfit. It is also somewhat of a trial to a nurse to find that any excessive appearance of cleanliness and neatness is a source of great danger, especially to children, who are thereby rendered so desirable and attractive in the eyes of the fairies that they might kidnap them.

As an example of the difficulties a nurse encounters in reaching her patients, Lady Hermione told of one called to a case who rode seven miles on her bicycle, then five miles on horseback, and finally crossed a lake in a boat before reaching the pathway, some hundred yards in length, which led to the patient's house.

She also described how, thanks to the initiative of Lady Dudley, a fund has been raised to endow nurses, who are also trained as midwives, for these necessitous parts. Before the advent of these nurses the mortality in maternity cases was abnormal; since then a death has become the exception. Formerly epidemics of typhus and measles decimated the villages. Now there is a distinct improvement.

While problems differ in different places, a few aspects of district nursing must always re-

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