

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,097.

SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 1909.

XL II.

Editorial.

A FLOATING HOSPITAL FOR SICK BABES.

The paramount importance of pure air as an agent in the healing of the sick is becoming increasingly recognised, tuberculosis patients live out-of-doors, day and night, verandahs are being added to our hospitals that the beds of patients who can be moved may be wheeled into the fresh air. The experience of the South African War was that the wounds of the men nursed in tents did excellently well, and both in this country, and in Germany, the value of open-air schools for delicate children has been proved beyond question.

As will be seen in another column the principle which has been so successfully adopted in the case of older patients has, at Boston, U.S.A., for several years, been applied to the sick babies of that city, and, it is reasonable to suppose, that if the more stable nervous organisations of adults are more or less poisoned by impure air, those of fragile infants must be injured to a still greater degree, and that fresh air treatment is therefore especially beneficial to them.

So Boston has established a floating hospital in its Harbour, which has been the means of saving the lives of many hundreds of sick infants, and an experienced Superintendent—Miss Goodwin—is in charge of the nursing department. It has permanent wards, where sick babies are cared for day and night, and on deck, in what are called the "open-air wards," the day patients are received. Here there are rows upon rows of tiny cots with only a rail enclosing them, and a roof over them, and a trained nurse, who recently visited this hospital, learnt that the babies thrive wonderfully, and some who have not slept for a week at home sleep for hours on the boat even in the midst of a hundred

others laughing, crying, screaming and moaning.

Why should not London's babies have a similar hospital? Right through some of the most crowded and poverty-stricken localities flows Father Thames, instinct with the life-giving breezes which come straight from the North Sea.

Why cannot we, on the breast of this beautiful health-giving river, maintain a floating hospital for the teeming infant population of this great city? Hundreds of cots would not be too many to meet its requirements. Anchored at some convenient spot, it could follow the example of Boston's marine hospital, and float away on fine summer days towards the open sea. Thus the poor little "wasters" of the East End would be given a chance of life—a life which should be healthy, and consequently useful and serviceable to the nation, instead of feeble and sickly, probably needing care later on in one or other of the institutions for the incurable, the feeble minded, or the insane.

We are nowadays beginning to realise the paramount importance of care in infancy to the rearing of a healthy race.

And the benefits of this hospital need not be limited to the babies, but weary mothers, on whom the burden of poverty falls most heavily, might also receive its kindly care, and rested and recruited return to their homes with renewed hope—courage rarely fails these patient workers—to face the battle of life.

We commend the suggestion to those interested in the social welfare of the poor and the improvement of the national physique. Could not the interest of the Lady Mayoress, who has so true and warm a sympathy with all which makes for the betterment of the people, be enlisted, so that it may take practical shape?

previous page

next page