

The nurses had 70 cases which they nursed under very difficult circumstances owing to the distress so sadly prevalent, losing only 12 cases out of 70. They had also 233 cases of pneumonia, and in this serious strait the Samaritan Fund was of the utmost value, and it would have been impossible to cope with the poverty of the patients without its assistance.

The Committee state that 1908 was a year of good, useful and benevolent work, a record year in truth, and one to be proud of. The work has been thorough, their staff has laboured harmoniously and untiringly, its members have shown energy, courage, and patience in dealing with many a difficult problem during a year which has been, in many ways, an unusually trying one. It is undeniable that their powers of endurance, their skill and tenderness have been taxed to the uttermost, and the Committee are glad to bear testimony to the manner in which the district nurses responded to the demand upon them, and to record their hearty appreciation of it. Without the cordial co-operation of Miss Purvis and the nursing staff such an amount of work would be impossible, and the Executive Committee render them their sincere thanks.

The Belfast Guardians had under consideration at their last meeting the report of the Medical Superintendent that the list of probationers awaiting appointment was exhausted, and asking that other candidates be called for examination. A somewhat heated discussion ensued during which Mr. Savage asserted that the Chairman of the Examination Committee had made a declaration which got into all the newspapers in Belfast that only Protestants should be appointed. This Mr. Culbert, the Chairman of the Committee, characterised as an "absolute falsehood," and his opponent replied: "You got up and asked how many Protestant nurses were appointed. You did not say it in words, but you meant it." Mr. Byrne, another member of the Board, moved that the advertisement should state "Turk, Jew, or Atheist may apply, but no Papist."

In this country happily feeling on religious differences is not so intense, but nowhere should it affect the appointment of suitable probationers, who should be selected entirely upon their merits. A happier topic was the report of the Infirmary Committee as to the new Children's Act, containing various recommendations, which received the consideration of the Guardians. Amongst them the suggestion for the appointment of a female protection visitor qualified to give necessary instruction

in the nursing and maintenance of infants. The report was adopted.

Miss J. C. Child, formerly Matron of the New Somerset Hospital, Cape Town, is doing Matron's duties for six months at the Hospital, Kimberley, while the Matron, Miss Gibson, takes a well-earned holiday at home. Miss Child was at one time Sister at the Kimberley Hospital, and has lately been doing Night Superintendent's duties there, so that it will be easy for her to take up the work, and she has received a warm welcome from many old friends.

Miss K. B. Codman, in *Charities and the Commons*, gives an interesting account of the work done by the Boston Instructive District Nursing Association in the city of Chelsea, after it had been swept by the fiercest fire known in New England since the Boston fire in 1872. When the Superintendent of the Association, Miss Martha H. Stark, with two nurses, reached Chelsea, they found the city in a state of chaos, and Miss Stark speedily realised that if anything was to be done it must be on her own initiative. She, therefore, utilised the gallery of a public hall as headquarters, and in spite of its drawbacks the nurses set to work to make the place into a dispensary. Tables were made by putting some old doors on the tops of chairs; white paper was laid over them and on this were placed the bottles, bandages, and medical supplies which the nurses had brought with them. Beds were improvised by putting settees together and folding blankets for mattresses. When a kerosene stove was found to heat the water necessary for their work the dispensary was complete.

An appeal for more nurses met with a ready response, and twenty-four were enrolled. Many serious cases were attended in this improvised hospital. Later, patients began to beg for help for sick people at home. It was then that Miss Stark, with her corps of nurses, increased by many volunteers, started work in the homes, where they found others beside the sick ones who needed help in various ways. The nurses found the home conditions peculiarly difficult as three or four families were crowded into flats meant for one, making scarcely room to work in. Some voting booths were also converted into contagious wards, and a nurse placed in charge. All of which proves the value of organisation, and the resourcefulness needed by district nurses in time of emergency.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)