

we may consider in discussion. But what do we stand to gain?

The status of nurses in our rate-supported hospitals to-day affords no criterion, as these hospitals have suffered in the past through being under the dominion of a discredited Poor Law, by the exclusion of the medical schools, and by the hopeless character of much of their work, so many, perhaps the majority, of their cases being received too late to do them any permanent good, since the only passport was, not necessity but destitution (although, as I indicated before, that state of things is modified to-day). But with all the drawbacks attending their work, nurses under the Poor Law have two main advantages which the nurses in voluntary hospitals have not, first, the pension or superannuation scheme established about 15 years ago; second, the support in time of need of a public department, the Local Government Board.

To take the first (I can only touch on them briefly) an automatic pension scheme would be in my opinion an immense boon to nurses.

It is not easy for them to save. Their pay is small (although I believe that is the least reason) the calls upon their sympathy and good-heartedness are many, and they are so far provided for that they have less experience in the use and value of money than many other women workers. We have a voluntary pension scheme at present, but I believe less than 10,000 nurses belong to it, and it is *not* the case that the few thousands who have entered are receiving more than those who remain outside. But nurses as a class in my judgment (with of course many exceptions) are somewhat lacking in prudence and foresight. The automatic deduction from salary, however, as under the Poor Law superannuation scheme, is not felt. You have so much less, and make up your mind to it. And, in addition to the material benefit, there is the official recognition of nurses as public servants. All members of State services are pensioned.

Secondly, the support of the Local Government Board. In this room nearly a year ago, we discussed the question of a Court of Appeal. Such a court for nurses under the Poor Law exists in the Local Government Board. There have been many cases in which a nurse or superintendent (for obvious reasons more often the latter) has been supported or re-instated in consequence of such appeal. I am far from thinking it desirable that nurses should appeal against their superiors or matrons against their Committees, except in extreme cases. Where friction occurs it is far better to part, and

seldom is all the right, or all the wrong, on one side. But there *are* instances of injustice and persecution. This cannot be denied. Such cases may be infrequent, but the knowledge that an impartial court of appeal existed would make them still less frequent. And so, by a paradox, the mere existence of such a court of appeal would tend to its own suppression.

Finally, when all nurses belong to a unified public service we may hope to see a levelling up, a raising of tone and standardising of training and certification. As a further outcome we may get better pay and prospects, but I will not venture too far at present into the dim and speculative future.

In these three directions, the raising and standardising of training and recognition of nurses as public servants, in the support of a Government department, and a universal pension scheme, I think we stand to gain by State support or control of the hospitals and medical and nursing services.

THE ASYLUMS OFFICERS' BILL.

THE SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

(Continued from page 353.)

The Reverend H. M. S. Bankart, Secretary of the National Asylum Workers' Union, was the next witness called before the Select Committee. He stated that the Union was formed some nine months previously, and had a membership of between 4,000—5,000 persons in England and Wales. The numbers would have been more but that the intimidation on the part of Committees and Superintendents was so strong that he found great difficulty in getting branches formed; the workers were threatened with instant dismissal if they dared join the Union. The Bill referred to the Select Committee was practically drafted by the Executive of his Union.

In reply to a remark by the Chairman that it was denied in some communications which had reached the Committee that there was any real or effective demand for the Bill, the witness thought that those who denied it knew nothing of the conditions of asylum life. He knew, because he had worked in an asylum for some years in the capacity of chaplain, and that was why he had formed the Union.

In answer to a question as to the case for the proposal to restrict the hours of duty in Asylums to 60, Mr. Bankart said that the case was the abominable conditions of life for the workers. "It has been objected," he said, "that it is not hard manual labour, and that to a certain extent is true, though there is a certain amount of manual labour when it takes four or five persons to restrain another, with the knowledge that if a slight excess of energy is used one may get dismissed for assault. But it is the intensely trying nature of the work,

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