

SOME PHASES OF POOR LAW NURSING.

Our report and comments on the resolution on nursing details brought forward by Mrs. Hooper, a member of the Tendring Board of Guardians, having brought us letters on the subject from Mr. Burden, the Master of the Tendring Workhouse, and also from the two trained members of the Nursing Staff, we thought the matter of sufficient interest to sick people in Workhouse Wards, to make further enquiries concerning the question, and to further comment upon them. The paragraph in question stating facts appeared in our issue of October 18th, last week we published Mr. Burden's letter, and now insert that from the nurses:—

NURSING AT THE TENDRING WORKHOUSE.

"The Editor, BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING,

"DEAR MADAM,—Our attention has been drawn to the paragraph in your issue of the 18th, with reference to the suggestions of one of the Lady Guardians, and it being so utterly at variance with facts, and so misleading, we would ask you to as publicly state:

"1. That the pillows are soft and the patients do not complain of them.

"2. That china mugs, cups and saucers, and feeders have always been in use, the only enamelled mugs being five small ones, which are kept for children.

"3. That there is always someone on duty in the Wards where there are bedded patients and every care is taken to arrange the cases so that those who require most attention get it.

"As to your remark, 'Poor Old People,' there is absolutely no need for this as the care and kindness, shewn to the patients from the Guardians down to the humblest Official in this Workhouse and Infirmary, will bear favourable comparison with any other Institution.

"Thanking you in anticipation,

"We are,

"Yours faithfully,

"THE NURSES.

"Tendring Infirmary,

"Weeley, R.S.O."

Upon receipt of this letter we forwarded the following questions to the Nurses asking for information which has been promptly given in the following replies:—

1. What are the pillows stuffed with?—Flock.
2. Of what is the bedding made?—Horse-hair mattresses.

3. Was the patient to whom Mrs. Hooper alluded using a chipped enamel mug?—Was using an enamelled mug *very slightly* chipped, entirely at her own request, as she fancied this particular one.

4. How many beds are there in the Infirmary? How many separate Wards? On how many floors?—Number of beds, 87; with an

average of 60 patients. Number of Wards, 14, on ground and first floor.

5. What is the number of the Nursing Staff?—On day duty, four—a trained nurse and three attendants. On night duty, two—a trained nurse and one attendant.

6. What are their hours on duty?—8 to 8, with usual times for meals; assistants, various times in turn.

REMARKS.

Pillows.—As the pillows are filled with flock, the suggestion made by Mrs. Hooper "That the aged and dying in the Infirmary be supplied with soft pillows" is, in our opinion, justified; especially as it was acknowledged at the meeting that there was only one soft pillow in the House, and the Master said, "he had no idea how a certain soft pillow came to be in the House."

We suggest that a supply of feather pillows be authorised by the Guardians, to be used by the nurses for those inmates who require them; such pillows should be provided with two tickings, so that the outer one can be constantly washed and kept absolutely clean and sanitary.

Bedding.—Horse-hair mattresses, as bedding, cannot be improved upon, if covered with washing removable covers, if turned daily, and occasionally placed in the open air.

Drinking utensils.—Mrs. Hooper stated that a patient was suffering from an ulcerated mouth through drinking from a chipped enamelled mug; and that only china drinking utensils should be used in the wards. This the nurses acknowledge, stating it was the patient's choice. At the meeting the chairman said feeding-cups were provided, and that if a cup and saucer were preferred patients could have them.

The Medical Officer stated that the patient had what was known as "Thrush," which was caused by milk, not by contact with an enamelled mug.

In this connection we may mention that thrush is a disease caused by the *oidium albicans*, a microbe which flourishes in decomposed milk in the mouth. It is usually the result of lack of cleanliness in children and old persons, through the mouth not being kept in a sanitary condition by the nurse. This is a nursing detail, to which nurses should very carefully attend. The teeth should be brushed frequently, in the case of adults, with a solution of peroxide of hydrogen, and the mouth be washed out with a mild antiseptic solution. Anointing the tongue and gums with glycerine and borax is most inimical to the life of the *oidium albicans*, and where this is regularly done thrush is rarely seen.

Number of Beds and Wards.—The Tendring Workhouse Infirmary contains 87 beds in 14 different wards, situated on two floors. They contain an average of 60 patients and only two trained nurses—one on day duty and one on night duty—and 4 untrained attendants are employed. These two nurses are apparently responsible for the nursing in these 14 wards for each alternate twelve hours. Mrs. Hooper referred

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