

dependent action taken by the General Practitioners' Alliance, which, in many ways, is of the deepest significance.

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THE Editor would be greatly obliged for any votes which his readers may have for the Asylum for Idiots, Earlswood, Red Hill, Surrey, as there is a very deserving case seeking admittance to this Institution, which the Editor would be glad to assist.

S. G.

### Notes by the Wayside.

BY OUR PERIPATETIC CORRESPONDENT.

I AM going to devote the space allotted to me this week mainly in dealing with a very important and a much neglected branch of Nursing. Most Doctors and Nursing authorities are agreed that sick diet is a powerful factor in the treatment of disease, and yet I do not know of one English Training School where any practical teaching on the subject is included in the Nurses' curriculum. For private work it is an absolute essential for the Nurse to be well up in the theory of food for the sick room, and that she should be able to set to work and prepare and cook everything that may be needed by a patient unable to take the diet as furnished by the every-day "plain cook."

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WE can readily imagine how such a Nurse would be treasured in a middle-class house, where the domestic resources were rather limited, and we can readily understand how indignant some Nurses will be at the suggestion that they should regard "cookery" as a part of Nursing. I never feel that I am relegated to the position of a housemaid when I make my patient's beds, and I do not think that I am on the level of a cook when I triumphantly bear into the sick room some dainty little dish of my own manufacture to tempt the weary appetite of an invalid.

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It is a curious anomaly that a Nurse can go through her whole three years' training, receive an elaborate certificate, and even gain a gold medal without being able to make a cup of beef-tea or peptonise a pint of milk.

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I MUST confess that it was so in my own case (barring the gold medal!) I was never even asked

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one question about food, and so far as I can remember, we had only one lecture on diet, although in this particular London Hospital we were always regarded as very much be-lectured and examined. After leaving my *Alma Mater* I had an opportunity of thoroughly studying and practising the art of sick cookery, and it occurred to me then that the teaching should be a regular branch of Hospital training and should not be added on as an after-luxury, which many Nurses cannot afford to get, or be learned hap-hazard by years of experiment on long-suffering digestions.

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THEY manage these things better in America. There, in the more important Training Schools, each Nurse undergoes, as an essential part of her curriculum, a three months' probation in what is called the "diet kitchen." The "diet kitchen" is as inevitable a department of the Hospital as is the Dispensary. A first-class cook—one who can preach as well as practice her art—is head of the department, and under her guidance and practical teaching the Nurse is able, in her three months' course, to gain an excellent insight into the ways and methods of invalid cooking. This portion of her training corresponds exactly with that which informs the embryo Doctor concerning the mixing of drugs and manufacture of pills, and is, indeed, a far more important item in the economy of healing; for man has been known to recover from disease without the aid of medicine, but no man has ever got the better of an illness unassisted by the doughty hand of the cook!

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IN the "diet kitchen" the Nurse learns first to make ready the patients' meal-trays, the infusing of tea and coffee as it should be infused, and the making of wholesome, digestible toast—which, let me here remark, is nothing like the layer of stodgy bread between two quickly-scorched exteriors usually called by that name—being among other useful things carefully practised. By slow and sure degrees she advances in the various stages of the art, until she arrives at the dignity of concocting scientific and delicious dishes, learning the best methods of combining savour and digestibility. And when I fall ill, may I be blessed with a Nurse who has made pleasant and practical use of her time in such an American diet kitchen—provided, as it should be, by her Training School; or its English equivalent—provided, as it should not be, by herself.

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