

years ago, have been borne out by subsequent facts.

But a correspondent has asked us the pertinent and searching question:—"You admit that some Nurses need help in their old age, or when overtaken by sickness. Granted, if you please, that this Fund has all the defects you mention, how would you have organized it, or what do you propose in its stead?" We could not refuse such a challenge. We fully recognised the justice and cogency of the argument, and—although our hands were full with journalistic work—for more than six months we have been negotiating and organising the scheme, which, in brief, we laid before our readers in our first issue of this year.

We have arranged that the Prudential Assurance Company of London, which has FOURTEEN MILLIONS of invested capital, shall grant Deferred Annuities to Nurses. We have arranged that the Sickness and Accident Assurance Association of Edinburgh, which has a capital of A QUARTER OF A MILLION, shall grant Sick Pay to Nurses. That is our scheme, done in a business-like manner—a purely commercial matter, without an element of charity in it. And, as we shall show directly, it is, therefore, very much better and cheaper for Nurses. And our proposals with regard to the management of the Pension Fund, would have been very simple. The £40,000 given by the benevolent would have been invested as a Foundation Fund, and at four per cent. would have produced £1,600 a year. The arrangements which we have now made with two Insurance offices would have been made, and in travelling expenses, postages, and so forth, would have cost about £20. Then fifty PENSIONS, of £20 a year each, would have been given to Nurses who were past work, destitute, and friendless. That would have absorbed £1,000 a year. The remaining £600 a year would have been allowed to accumulate and accumulate, and the offer would have been made, to give, to every Nurse who obtained an Annuity from the Insurance office, half the amount per annum from the Pension Fund—provided that the Committee of the Fund considered her to be in need of such assistance. A small Committee, meeting in a private house once a month, an Hon. Secretary, and two Trustees, could have worked this scheme; and its total expenses, for postages and cheque-books, would have been about twenty-five shillings a year. Thrift amongst Nurses would have been greatly encouraged. To commence with, a number of deserving cases would have

been placed in a position of comfort, and as the scheme became better known, the number of pensions would, undoubtedly, have been considerably increased by further benefactions given for that specific purpose. In two or three other ways the scheme could have been further adapted to render the greatest assistance to Nurses.

Such is the scheme which we would have proposed, and we are glad to know that it has elicited the kind commendation of our former critic. Immense good would have been done at an expense of thirty shillings a year.

But now that we have given our alternative plan, we have a serious word to say concerning the Royal National Pension Fund. We pass over the fact that it cost a very large sum to start this new, and quite unnecessary, Insurance Office, and that it takes some £1,200 a year for its maintenance out of the pockets of a very poorly-paid class of workers.

The chief object of the Fund is stated to be "to afford to Nurses an absolutely safe means of providing, *at the lowest possible cost to themselves*, an allowance during incapacity for work caused by sickness or accident, and a certain income for their declining years." Now the words which we have italicised contain the only possible reason and excuse for the existence of the Fund. But we very gravely contend that those words are entirely untrue, and therefore most misleading. Let us take some figures haphazard from the Tables of our scheme, and the corresponding figures from the Tables of the National Pension Fund.

A Nurse, aged thirty, to purchase a Deferred Annuity of £30 per annum, payable when she reaches the age of fifty-five, must pay—

	National Pension Fund.	Prudential Assur. Co.	Excess of Payment to N.P.F.
Single Premium ...	£228 7 6 ...	£180 16 9 ..	£47 10 9
Quarterly Premium	3 7 6 ...	2 18 0 ..	0 11 6

In some instances, this extravagant—and almost incredible—disproportion between the Premiums demanded by the two Companies for the same benefit, is even more marked than in the above instances. Our Sick Pay scheme, again, is calculated upon an entirely different system, and one much more applicable to the needs of Nurses than that of the Pension Fund, and we are, therefore, unable to make a fair comparison between the two. But, practically, the differences are even greater in this instance, because, under our scheme, a Nurse may apply for Sick Pay alone, but, in the case of the National Pension Fund, she cannot do so, unless she also subscribes for an Annuity.

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