

THE SWEDISH RED CROSS VISITING HOUSEKEEPER.

Since 1926, when only two of the 24 districts into which the Swedish Red Cross is divided employed visiting housekeepers, this form of social service has proved itself so valuable that by 1939 22 districts had provided 125 visiting housekeepers. In 1938 alone, some two score new visiting housekeepers were recruited. What are the conditions under which they work, how are they remunerated, and what do they do?

Answers to these and allied questions are to be found in the July number of the Swedish Red Cross Magazine for 1939. The visiting housekeeper's opportunity comes when, in a poor home, illness or a confinement has temporarily deprived it of the services of the housewife. The visiting housekeeper is a substitute for the housewife and not for a nurse whose duties are quite different. The visiting housekeeper must herself be an efficient housewife, capable of simple cooking. She must be able to make beds, keep the house clean, mend and wash clothing, and—most important—take charge of children. Patiently and with a sympathetic comprehension of the economic limitations of the home, she must perform its many duties. With a high standard of cleanliness, not least in her own work, she teaches elementary lessons in hygiene to those for whom she cares.

At first it is often difficult to make the prospective recipients of her services understand that she is no critical or pretentious stranger entering the home to upset it. Once she has entered it and made herself useful in it, the part she plays is appreciated as she meets one need after another. The equipment with which she enters upon her duties is nothing more nor less than that of any capable housewife. She does not in any sense compete with the trained nurse, although it is desirable that she should have attended Red Cross courses in hygiene, nursing, infant welfare, first aid, etc. Indeed, a few visiting housekeepers have had the training of a nurse, but their functions are quite distinct from those of a nurse, being identical with those of the housewife who is temporarily replaced.

The homes to which the visiting housekeeper comes are, as a rule, poor, and, when they are in the country, she may have to play the part of the housewife also outside the home. The conditions under which she works vary considerably. In some areas, the services she renders are not continuous; when there is no emergency, she attends to her own affairs. But at present, whole-time services are required in most cases of her. The remuneration depends on local conditions and whether she is engaged on a part-time or whole-time basis. The scale of pay is, of course, much lower than for the visiting nurse whose training has cost so much more.

While the remuneration of nurses is more or less uniform, being Kronor 75 per month with two rises according to seniority, each of Kronor 120 per year, and board and lodging and laundry, the remuneration of visiting housekeepers is still very variable. For individual services, from Kronor 30 to Kronor 75 or more per month are paid according to circumstances. A part-time visiting housekeeper may be paid by the day or hour while, at the same time, she may receive a small retaining salary such as Kronor 15 per month. It is well when arrangements are made between a Red Cross body and a visiting housekeeper for the terms concerning remuneration, duties and privileges to be committed to writing.

The homes enjoying the services of a visiting housekeeper are usually too poor to be able to contribute much to her remuneration. Local Red Cross organisations may also be unable to defray all the expenses and must, therefore, look to meeting them by appeals to the local authori-

ties, savings banks, industrial companies, etc. The Red Cross may also organise bazaars, lotteries and entertainments with the special object of obtaining funds for this work. Co-operation may also be established between the Red Cross and other philanthropic bodies with a view to sharing this expense.

In principle, all payments should be made to the organisation employing the visiting housekeeper who should not receive any contribution herself save with the object of passing it on to the organisation employing her. It is this organisation or the person or committee representing it, whose duty it is to decide whether a home enjoying the services of a visiting housekeeper is to pay for them wholly, partly, or not at all. And it must be made clear to all concerned that the visiting housekeeper receives her remuneration only from the organisation employing her according to a written agreement between them.

As this activity has developed, the Swedish Red Cross has found it to be more and more appreciated, not only by individual homes and the public in general, but also by municipal and other local authorities capable of gauging the value of welfare work of different kinds.

INFECTIOUS HOSPITALS MATRONS' ASSOCIATION.

Annual General Meeting.

The Annual General Meeting of the Infectious Hospitals Matrons' Association will be held at the Isolation Hospital, Mays Lane, Barnet, Herts, on Saturday, June 28th, at 2 p.m. The main subject for discussion will be the Civil Nursing Reserve Scheme.

Luncheon at 12 noon will be provided for those who desire it, for a small charge.

The Secretary, Miss Beatrice M. West, S.R.N., S.C.M., at the hospital, will be much obliged if members will inform her of their intention to be present at the meeting, and which, in view of present conditions, no other notice will be issued.

RESEARCH DIRECTOR.

Dr. Charles H. Best, collaborator with the late Sir Frederick Banting in the discovery of insulin, has been appointed to succeed Sir Frederick as Director of the Banting-Best Department of Medical Research at the University of Toronto.

Sir Frederick Banting, whose work prolonged the lives of thousands of sufferers from diabetes, was killed in an air crash in Newfoundland, in February—an irreparable loss to science.

QUEEN ALEXANDRA'S IMPERIAL MILITARY NURSING SERVICE.

We regret to record the death, at Weybridge, Surrey, of Miss Edith C. Cheetham, R.R.C.

Miss Cheetham retired with the rank of Matron, Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service, in 1926. She served all through the last Great War, was awarded the decoration of the Royal Red Cross for her valuable services.

ERSATZ ORANGE JUICE.

A Sheffield chemist claims to have created a syrup containing ten times the vitamin C potency of pure orange juice.

If true, it should make his fortune!

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)