

Miss Wilkinson, President of the Trained Nurses' Association of India, has written that they hope to begin a modified scheme for central training in Delhi this Autumn. There, it will serve civil as well as mission hospitals. She says "This scheme is not intended to take the place of the fuller one, which is admirable, but is suggested as a beginning towards the larger scheme which should eventually be adopted."

Miss Wileke, of the Swedish Mission in Ramnad district, has already introduced the block system in her hospital, with great success.

The Post-Graduate college for nurses is now an established fact.

In conclusion, In view of the urgency of these matters, I would ask this Council (Punjab Christian Council) to approach the mission bodies with a view to obtaining their co-operation in raising the standard of the training of nurses in their hospitals, and of the status and salary of the trained staff nurses they employ. I would suggest that they be asked to form a committee to consider whether a central training school on the block system is a possible way of solving the problem. Nursing sisters should be adequately represented on this committee.

I would urge that any scheme for post-war reconstruction of nursing education be formulated now, and as far as possible steps be taken to begin to put it into practice in the immediate future. It is essential that a beginning be made without delay, even though the fulfilling of the whole scheme may not be practicable until after the war.

Public Health Midwifery Section

An Experience. By Anima Guha Niyogi.

I am a newly passed health visitor, having left the health school last year, 1942. Everybody has a charming idea of the service on entering it, but in practical life things are very different. I am now going to describe the short experience of my service life.

I was posted to Barinpur on the 7th May, 1942. I wrote a letter to the secretary of the maternity and child welfare centre informing him of the date and time of my arrival, as instructed in the appointment letter. On arriving I found to my surprise that there was nobody at the station to receive me! It is an ordinary village station and I could not even get a coolie. First I went to the local hospital and then almost from door to door, but nobody could tell me anything about the centre. Luckily my father was with me and we went to the local post office and from there to the municipal office, where I found that they had neither any committee nor any secretary nor any centre for the purpose for which I had been appointed. At last a gentleman came to my rescue and accommodated me in his family for the time being and I stayed there seventeen days. The gentleman had a very big family and it was not possible for me to stay there for a long time. In the meantime, I saw the chairman who was also supposed to be the secretary of the Maternity and Child Welfare centre, and had a discussion with him. But to my surprise he too, although a prominent member of the local bar, lacked proper ideas of my business. In spite of my repeated requests, the chairman could not arrange for any quarters for me. He suggested my putting up in the house of a gentleman as paying guest where I would be supplied with a room in a straw hut, which was dark, ill-ventilated and almost uninhabitable.

Before the superintendent very kindly came for inspection, I had shifted to a house that was being built, without the approval of the chairman. The superintendent kindly saw the house personally and approved of it as a temporary residence, till the permanent house was built. The house was incomplete, rain drops dribbled through the tiles, the tube well was defective and no furniture had been supplied either for me or the centre.

Regarding the work of the centre, I have not yet been provided with a whole-time dai even, no cards no forms—not to speak of a clinic.

Now for the place:—It is situated on the Diamond Harbour railway line and is a junction and a chowkee—with a P. S. one civil court a P. and T. O. and a sub-registrar's office. Diamond Harbour is only 20-22 miles from here. The area is 3½

sq. miles now overwhelmingly peopled by soldiers. One does not feel safe to go out alone on visiting duty. The population is about 7,130. Most of the people, except the lower class ones, are educated but sadly lack the light of modern civilization. They are mostly stick-in-the-mud people cherishing fondly their old-world thoughts and ideas, though the place is very near Calcutta (not more than 15 miles). The zamindar family is rich and educated but their standoffishness is marked. The rest are the labouring class, very poor.

Most of the babies are flabby and artificially fed. Mothers have got the idea that if the babies are not fed on cow's milk from birth, they can't digest it later on. Another peculiar idea they have is, that the nursing mothers must not have more than one pound of water daily upto 10 or 12 days after delivery, otherwise they will get Oedema. There are three so-called trained 'dais' who are practising. Though they are trained they do not cut the cord. They say, they can not do it in the teeth of social convention, thus negating the effect of their training. Most of the cases are in the hands of the illiterate dais, who cut the cord with pieces of split bamboo. One day I saw with an aching heart the sad death of a new-born baby (weighing about 7 lbs) from tetanus. It was a primi-para case conducted by a dai. The mother had a bad tear and got high fever. In spite of my repeated requests and explaining the bad effects of it, I could not make the relatives get it stitched up. I do not know the present condition of the mother as she was sent away to her father's place.

The system of early marriage is, very common, and arrangements for girls' education are very poor. The place is notorious for malaria which takes a heavy toll of life every year. Fruit and vegetables are abundant, but they are exported to Calcutta even from their budding stage.

The pity of it all is that the women of the place are innocent of things which are happening in the world outside. Cribbed, cabined and confined, they drag on their life of drudgery, not knowing how little they know. Living as they do in blissful ignorance they stick fast to the 18th century ideas and live in a world of befogged fancy. Root and branch reform is essential. It is high time that the spread of proper ideas, adult female education, and the education of mothers was taken up in right earnest. The few educated girls I met offered no redeeming feature. They do not think of things outside their kitchen. They all lack power, energy, vision and insight. They dare not translate the good ideas they have into reality. Hence arises the need of setting up a maternity and child welfare centre, with a building, however humble, of its own as early as possible, staffed efficiently with at least two whole-time trained dais and an energetic H. V. at its head in a clinic with the minimum apparatus and medicine to start with. People educated and uneducated sadly betray their ignorance of the idea that prevention is better than cure, in practice if not in theory. Too much of medicine and artificial food are in use. The literate section are thoroughly conversant with the names of hundreds of patent medicines which they use to a degree, with little idea of the value of the stuff they use. To minister to the health and happiness of the newborn babies is to render yeoman service to the nation and this depends on paying much heed to dietetics and not to medicine. But there are few who realise this and still fewer who act accordingly. The filtration theory will do little good here, those who are at the helm of affairs are die-hard conservatives, but a workable clinic giving real help, material help, and simple lectures will go a great way towards making the ignorant mass realise the gravity of the situation and attract them to come in hundreds to avail themselves of the good they can obtain from the maternity and child welfare centre.

A Cheerful Nurse

A cheerful nurse is like a sunny day—she sheds brightness all around. And most nurses can, if they choose, make a hospital a palace or a prison. The contagion of cheer has a wonderful effect—it helps to transform sickness into health. It should be taught in all training schools.