

served with lunch, and then there would be a lull until dinner time. It was at the dinner table of this particular hospital that I became celebrated as an expeditious peeler of potatoes. Sometimes, I must confess, economy was sacrificed to velocity, and hence many a potato by the time it had passed through my hands had become small and beautifully less; but I had always this consolation, that I never left a particle of the skin on. I will do the hospital authorities justice by recording the fact that the mutton we had for dinner was of the best quality. I am not quite certain what took place after dinner, but I have a general impression that most of the patients vanished under the sheets, and resigned themselves to Morpheus. At half-past four we had tea, subsequently prayers, then supper; and at eight o'clock the sorest trial of all—"No more talking!" Some of the patients of a Jesuitical turn of mind argued that this did not include "whispering," and hence conversations of the most edifying character have been carried on without the officials deriving that benefit from them which otherwise they might have done. During the whole of the day the patients were in danger of being killed with kindness. Several times a day there was medicine—I didn't mind this, as my medicine was pleasant to the taste, but to some these periodical doses must have been far from agreeable; and at this moment I cannot recollect how many times a day the beds were made comfortable for the patients. I don't believe there is a harder-worked person than a hospital nurse; and yet there are scores of ladies performing the duties of the position cheerfully. I can conceive of no other position requiring such self-command and such self-sacrifice.

After the patients had been made comfortable for the night, it was usual for the house-surgeons to visit the ward and inquire into each case. And now about visiting days. These were of two kinds. Twice or more a week the physicians visited the hospital. On such occasions there were great efforts to paint the lily; in other words, to make the ward look more perfect than it was normally—an almost impossible task. To a new patient the arrival of the physician, accompanied by some twenty or thirty students, was generally a source of uneasiness, particularly if he imagined that an operation might have to be performed. I felt certain that I was doomed to be operated upon, and that, at any rate, was my feeling. At such visits it is a significant sign when the screen is placed round a patient, and physician and student surround his bed. When the screen was placed round my bed, I called to mind all the horrible stories I had heard from anti-vivisectionists; but I soon became reconciled to my fate, and bore the operation with, I hope, as good a grace as possible—at least with as much patience as I could muster. I am bound to state that from the physician to the youngest student present I received the most considerate attention, and I fully believe that the operation was performed with a minimum of pain to myself. During the whole of the time I was in hospital I saw nothing in the conduct of the students to justify some of the vulgar prejudices entertained concerning them. On the contrary, the majority of them seemed only too anxious to derive that practical insight into the medical profession which hospital practise undoubtedly affords. Into the various operations I saw performed I have no business to enter; so I will pass on to the other class of visitors—the friends of the patients. The days when such visitors were permitted to come were anxiously expected by the patients. None but those who have spent a month or two in an hospital can understand the feeling with which such visiting days are anticipated, and the regret with which patients see their friends leave the ward. One hour and a half was the time allowed, and the patients had generally so much to communicate, and the visitors also so much to communicate, that the time seemed to fly, and often conversations had to be broken off just at those critical points where in tales one reads "To be continued in our next." Many affecting scenes are associated with these visiting days, for in many cases friends leave the ward with the knowledge that in all probability the patient they have visited will not be in his place at the next visiting day. During the months I was an inmate I saw many new faces and many distressing sights which I shall never forget. I cannot conceive of anything more humbling than to see men of splendid physique confined to their beds. In most of such cases the cause is aneurism. Many wonderful cures I saw effected. Some of the patients told me that they all thought I should never leave the ward alive. I was under the same impression. There were several whom I gave up, but afterwards had the satisfaction of seeing walk out of the ward

quite recovered. After this lapse of time, I care not to recall the many distressing scenes I witnessed: I prefer to speak of the friendships formed in hospital, and of the way in which the wealthy might render life in such a place less monotonous. In an hospital ward social distinctions are forgotten, and patients freely tell one another matters which, out of the hospital, would never be mentioned. I am sorry to say that in nearly every case there was a tale of suffering and privation which never could have been guessed from the cheerfulness of the patients. What is the inference I wish to be drawn from this? It is that in our hospitals nearly every bed contains a patient whose anxieties would be relieved, and who would be able to endure more bravely his sufferings, if some kind friend would unobtrusively discover and relieve the hardships which his presence in hospital may have entailed upon wife and children, or father and mother, as the case may be. In my own case it was an unspeakable satisfaction to know that kind friends had not forgotten to provide for those at home. And then to relieve the monotony inseparable from life in an hospital I know of no more acceptable boons than good books. My friends kept me well supplied, and it was gratifying to me to find constant applications for them. I know I am touching on dangerous ground when I venture to indicate what books should be given or lent, and that being so, I will content myself by saying that among the best are undoubtedly standard novels. As a rule, works of a serious character are always to be obtained in most hospitals. In concluding these rambling recollections, I shall feel myself amply repaid if I succeed in inducing any reader to take a greater interest in the poor creatures to be found in our hospitals.

THE NATIONAL PENSION FUND.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

Freeman's Journal.

THE lines of a mutual assurance society are closely followed, the fundamental rule being kept in mind of making the contributions of the members sufficient to defray the sick allowances and pensions, as calculated by well-known actuaries. Only thus could financial stability be secured. The scheme certainly claims the sympathy and support of all who appreciate the noble work done by those whose mission is to relieve suffering, as well as those who desire to see habits of thrift promoted amongst the people. We are anxious to know what part, if any, Ireland will occupy in regard to the scheme. If once taken up by a few influential members of the medical profession, there should be no difficulty in bringing the scheme under the notice of all in this country who possess the qualifications necessary for membership.

THE MATRONS' CORNER.

"LADY COOKS FOR HOSPITALS."

WHY do not those who advocate the plan just put it into practice? It has been tried in one of the largest hospitals in the kingdom with the happiest results. The first necessity is of course "to catch your cook," who must of necessity have a talent for cooking; must next have the qualities that make a good mistress of a household, and must not less have the good sense and dignity which will enable her to grapple with the difficulties of the situation, and to overcome them quietly. Roman Catholics set the example in their organisations. With them one finds a Sister in the kitchen, one over the laundry, and one over the linenry—just as over a hospital ward, or school, or any other department of their work; and this without any parade of condescension. In the same hospital a like plan has been adopted in the laundry and linenry, a Sister being placed over each department. Such experiments should be made quietly, and need not be discussed beforehand.

R. NORRIS.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

WITHOUT HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATION?

MR. ROBERT DAVIDSON, Hon. Sec. Tynemouth Infirmary, asks:—"Is there a town or borough in the United Kingdom of 50,000 inhabitants without an hospital or infirmary other than the workhouse hospital for paupers, or the hospital for infectious diseases belonging to the Corporation?"

* * * After careful inquiry we are satisfied that it may be safely asserted that there is no town or borough in the United Kingdom having a population of 50,000 inhabitants which is entirely destitute of hospital accommodation.—Ed. T. H.

THE letter of "A Private Nurse" is too long for publication.