

"The National Pension Fund for Nurses is an institution the establishment of which has been long in contemplation. The founder, Mr. Burdett, has laboured diligently for many years in order to ensure that the fund should be so organised as to meet the conditions and requirements of all whom it is desired to benefit. Its chief object is to provide for nurses, at the least possible cost to themselves, during incapacity for work from sickness or accident, and a certain income during their declining years. This object will be carried out by receiving and investing such fixed periodical sums as those who join the fund can afford, and by supplementing these sums by a bonus fund created and maintained by those interested in nurses and nursing institutions."

In the first place we should be wanting considerably in good feeling if we failed to express our great admiration for the four gentlemen—Lord Rothschild, Mr. H. H. Gibbs, Mr. E. A. Hambro, and Mr. J. S. Morgan—who have so nobly come forward with the sum of £5,000 each, depositing the same with the Accountant General in Chancery as security for the annuitants and policy holders. All praise is due to these gentlemen for their disinterestedness. We also feel it our duty to express the thanks of the nursing profession to Mr. H. C. Burdett, for his energy in organising and founding the fund. But, if the chief object of the fund is to "afford nurses a means of providing, at the least possible cost, the greatest advantage in an allowance during incapacity for work, &c.," all we can say is that the fund signally fails in this its primary intention; for a careful examination of the tables set forth (which we shall take and consider table for table in due course) convinces us that nurses will not obtain the best value for their investments from this source. No one more than the nurses themselves feels the hardships they have to undergo. Nursing is in itself a particularly arduous and precarious occupation; it taxes greatly the physical and mental energies, and is, up to a certain point, a heavy drain upon the resources. At the best, looking at it in the most favourable light, viewing it from the most sanguine standpoint, its remuneration is small and its honours few. Years of hard drudgery and careful work have to be gone through before the nurse is able to earn anything like a competency, and while even to those who possess some means of their own the work is irksome and costly, it is doubly so to those who have nothing to fall back upon. The fund is essentially intended for the assistance of those who have no other means of support than that which arises from their daily vocation, and to those the expense of even a few shillings a month is a matter of considerable moment. When these months have to extend over a large number of years, and then at the end only secure at the best a very insignificant

return, it is clear that we shall only be doing our duty to the nurses, no less than to the promoter of the fund himself, by stating at once that we do not consider the fund as its tables now stand to be able to compete with other institutions at present in existence, or to offer to the nurses the advantages which they can obtain elsewhere for the same investment. Therefore, we earnestly ask all nurses, and those who contemplate joining a fund of this description, to withhold their money and support until such times as we have put before them sufficient evidence to enable them to judge which is most suited for them.

(To be continued.)

REMINISCENCES OF A SMALL-POX EPIDEMIC.

By ISLA STEWART.

ALTHOUGH small-pox can at present only be considered epidemic in Sheffield, it would appear to be on the increase in other large towns, and as according to authority we may expect it to visit London also during the present year, I venture to hope that the relation of a few facts regarding its history, and of the mode of treating it during the last epidemic, may at the present time prove not altogether uninteresting.

The history of small-pox is not clearly known. Dr. Collie states that the disease is mentioned in a Chinese book dated 1100 B.C. It was apparently noticed in Europe in the sixth century, and the "black death" that devastated Europe in the time of the Crusades was probably small-pox in its worst form. Till the practice of inoculation was introduced by Lady Mary Wortley Montague, in the reign of Queen Anne, it was considered to be the most formidable of pestilences, excepting perhaps the plague. This practice has since been modified and developed by Jenner's discovery that "cow-pox" procured for human beings immunity from small-pox, and vaccination has since been introduced with so much effect that this virulent disease has lost half its terrors. It is worth knowing how Lady Mary came to take so much interest in small-pox. Her brother, Lord Kingston, died of it about the year 1715. His sister mourned him deeply. In 1716, while in Constantinople (where her husband was Ambassador), she writes thus to her friends:—

"The small-pox, so fatal and so general with us, is here rendered harmless by the invention of ingrafting, which is the term they use. There is a set of old women who make it their business to perform the operation every autumn, in the month of September, when the great heat is abated. People send to one another to know if any of their family has a mind to have the small-pox; they make parties for this purpose, and when they are met the

previous page

next page