

LIFE IN A COTTAGE HOSPITAL.

IN speaking or thinking of a Cottage Hospital, one naturally thinks of a pretty building in a country village. The Hospital I am going to write about, in which I have been employed as Nurse for nearly five years, is just the opposite to such a picture. Our Hospital is placed in a back street in a manufacturing town in one of the Midland counties. It is surrounded by manufactories; in addition to these there are mines, and a few miles away an agricultural district, so that our patients are composed of all sorts and conditions of men and women.

The Hospital will accommodate thirty patients, or, by putting two in a bed in some of the Wards, thirty-eight patients. These are principally accident or surgical cases. If a member of the staff wishes to have a medical or special operation case admitted, it can be taken in, but we very seldom have any medical patients.

The Medical staff consists of four honorary and one Dental Surgeon; no resident. These gentlemen visit the Hospital and each take in accidents or other cases for a fortnight in turn, acting as Consulting Surgeons in any case requiring an operation. Before any operation a consultation is, if possible, held. During the last three years a telephone has been fixed in the Hospital, which communicates with all the Doctors' houses. As all of the staff live within a mile of the Institution, a Surgeon is quickly at hand when required.

In addition to the Matron, the Nursing Staff consists of one head, assistant, night, and one Probationer Nurse. The servants are, cook, house, laundry, and Ward maids. The convalescent patients are expected to help in keeping the Wards tidy, &c.

One advantage in a Cottage Hospital to the patients is the homeliness of the arrangements. Our Wards are small (there are six of them altogether), none of them holding more than four adult beds. In the Women's Ward are four cots for children, and in each of the two Mens' Wards downstairs is a cot for one little boy. The patients, as a rule, like to have a child in the Ward.

The Wards are very cheery. The walls are painted pale blue; bright red blankets in winter, and scarlet and white linen quilts in summer, add to the bright look. We also have a good many pictures, and an abundance of flowers in the summer season. The patients are allowed to smoke, from eight a.m. until five p.m. on visiting, and eight p.m. on non-visiting days. Patients may see two of their friends, on Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; visiting hours are from three to four, and six to 7.30. The patients find

their own linen and tobacco; everything else is supplied by the Institution. Out-patients, minor accidents, &c., are dressed by the Nurses from two to three, daily. These average twenty dressings every day.

Our—the Nurses'—day commences with breakfast at seven a.m. This is, as a rule, rather a hurried meal, as patients' breakfast must be served and some of the Wards tidy by 8.30 a.m. The patients' breakfast consists of bread and butter *ad libitum*; bad cases of course get toast, cocoa, or milk, according to diet. Eggs are, as a rule, provided by the patient; but if ordered by the Doctor, are supplied by the Institution. With the exception of tea-making, all is prepared by the Nurses. Then comes bed-making, patient-washing and dressing, Ward-sweeping and dusting.

Prayers are read by the Chaplain (rector of the parish), or by one of his two curates, at 8.30 a.m. every morning, with the exception of Sunday, when they are read by the Matron. Prayers are read in each of the Wards in turn, and Nurses, servants, and patients, who are able, are expected to attend.

After prayers the Nurses are occupied in dressing wounds and preparing for Doctors' visits. At ten the Nurses have lunch—a stand-up meal taken in the kitchen, consisting of bread and butter and coffee, or milk. Beef tea or milk is given to the patients who require it. From eleven to one the Surgeons pay their visit, but this is uncertain, as they come at any time convenient to themselves. At twelve the patients dine. Dinner consists, for ordinary patients, of meat, hot or cold, with one, or sometimes two, vegetables, milk pudding, and milk or beer (if ordered) to drink. This diet is varied by occasional fish or soup diets.

At one the Nurses dine. At two the out-patients are dressed. The Head and Assistant Nurses, as a rule, do the out-patient dressings, while the Probationer does what is required in the Wards. At three the Nurses have the one thing dear to a woman's heart—afternoon tea. At four the patients have tea on non-visiting days; on visiting afternoons it is sometimes a little later. This is simply a repetition of breakfast. At 5.30 the Nurses have tea. At 7.30 the patients have supper. This consists of bread and milk, or gruel. After this poultices, dressings, and making the patients comfortable for the night occupy the Nurses until 9.30, their supper time, after which the Night Nurse comes on, and the Day Nurses go off duty.

Of course, in a small Accident Hospital this routine is often not adhered to. For instance, just as the Nurses are busy with their morning work, a knock at the door will summon them to receive a badly-burnt child, or some poor fellow with

previous page

next page