

cases, have, to the immense advantage of these institutions, been already effected.

The first step to be taken in the application of a remedy for any evil is the discovery of its precise cause; and in regard to Workhouse Infirmaries, it may at once be said that the office and duties of the Matron are the points at which reform must begin if the Nursing departments of these institutions are ever to be placed upon a satisfactory footing; if the care of the sick pauper is ever to be efficiently carried out; and if, in short, the scandals which are at present so rife are ever to be obviated or removed. The first necessary step to be taken in this direction must be to make the duties of a Matron of a Poor Law Infirmary conform to those which are in force in all well managed General Hospitals. We maintain, therefore, that it is essential that the Matron of the Infirmary should be a thoroughly trained Nurse; nay, more, that the best women in the Nursing world should be encouraged to take such a post. It is clearly detrimental to the progress of Nursing in such institutions that this position should be, as formerly was the case, regarded as the proper refuge of women who failed to obtain the certificate of their Training Schools, or who, perchance, never concluded their training at all.

Having chosen a thoroughly trained Nurse as their Matron—a woman who has by her past career proved herself to be worthy of complete confidence—it is necessary that the Guardians should trust her. It goes without saying, indeed, that they have no justification for the appointment of an official in whom they have themselves no confidence, but current events would seem to show that Guardians are either innocent of a Matron's duties, or that they appoint persons whom they consider unfit for such a very responsible office. Then the relations between the medical and the nursing departments must be strictly defined, and not suffered to remain, as at present, in a chaotic state. As we have previously pointed out in these columns, it would be well that these relations should be identical with those which have been proved by many years' experience in General Hospitals to be of the greatest benefit and utility. In other words, we consider that the Matron, and not the Medical Officer, should be made responsible for the discipline and conduct of all the female workers in the Infirmary; the doctor having, of course, complete authority so far as the treatment of the sick is concerned, and the Matron being in this matter under the direct authority of the Medical Superintendent. On the other hand, the Infirmary Matron should be directly responsible to the Board of Guardians, just as the Matron is to the Committee of the Hospital, for the efficiency and good conduct of her staff. From this it will follow

that the Matron should have the full power of selecting her probationers—a matter, as our readers are aware, which has caused many so-called "Infirmary Scandals," and the last of which, indeed, we have only recently commented upon.

Then it would doubtless be well that each Infirmary should have what many of the leading general hospitals possess—a distinct Nursing Committee, composed, let us say, of the Medical Superintendent, and a certain number of the Guardians, amongst whom there certainly should be, if possible, some women. This Committee should have the power of controlling the Nursing department of the Infirmary. It should elect the probationers, hear and decide upon all complaints which arise in, or concerning, the department. It should arrange and supervise the training of the probationers, appoint the lecturers and examiners, and grant the necessary certificates upon the reports of the latter and of the Matron. It should inspect the wards and introduce, in fact, a more systematic oversight of the Nursing department on the part of the governing body than at present exists.

The cardinal principles, however, which have been enunciated—the responsibility of the Matron to the Resident Medical Officer and to the Guardians, and at the same time her undisputed authority over the female staff of the Infirmary—must be carried into a hundred details in the daily working of the Institution. The Matron should, for example, be made responsible for the general domestic management, and those who are acquainted with the working of Hospitals will realise the immense economy which such supervision could produce.

We base our recommendations for reform on the simple grounds that justice to the patients demands that they shall be efficiently nursed and cared for, and that this can only be effected when thoroughly trained Nurses are employed, and when the work of those Nurses is carefully watched and superintended; and that justice to the Matron and Nurses, alike, demands that the former shall not be required to make bricks without straw—to be made responsible for persons in whose selection she has had no voice, and whose Superintendent she is merely in name.

But there is a still further interest to be considered, to which thought is too rarely given. It is a well known fact that, in those Infirmaries in which unskilled pauper help is used, there is an enormous amount of wastefulness and extravagance. It has been proved by well-known authorities that the economy consequent upon the employment of thoroughly trained Nurses has been so great as not only to cover their cost to the Infirmary, but actually to produce a diminution in the gross expenditure.

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