

for the infirmaries under their control, and when will the Local Government Board learn that it should insist upon enough nurses being maintained to allow of the nursing being efficiently performed if Guardians do not recognize their duty in this respect? Further, when will the day come when the infirmaries of our workhouses are separate buildings, and the nurses are supervised by a trained Superintendent who is responsible for the domestic and nursing departments? ending the reign of the workhouse Matron, too often an ignorant woman, rarely possessed of any knowledge of nursing and of the needs of the sick. Until these reforms take place, the constant friction in workhouse infirmaries will never cease, and nurses who really care for their work, and conscientiously desire to do it, will be driven from their posts by the impossibility of working under the conditions imposed.

We have been led to make these remarks by the state of affairs at the Derry Workhouse Infirmary, where the above conditions prevail, namely, the supervision of the Infirmary by the Workhouse Matron, an insufficient nursing staff, and resulting friction. Further than this, there appears to have been unwarrantable interference by a woman Guardian. Guardians have certainly the right to make entries as to their observations in the book provided for the purpose, and to report to the Board of which they are members, but they exceed their duty when they individually assume control of nursing arrangements in the wards, as appears to be the case in the present instance.

According to information received by us, there are in the Infirmary 9 wards, containing, as a rule, about 70 patients. Two of the wards are for cases of scabies; there are about 8 imbeciles, and from 15 to 25 midwifery cases yearly. For this number of patients, two trained nurses, one on day and one on night duty, are provided, and one probationer, a most inadequate staff, even from the point of view of a poor law infirmary, and one which quite precludes close attention being given to individual patients. The nurses are provided with the help of two pauper wards-women for the day (these, however, being constantly changed), and two for four hours daily. The only attendance the nurses themselves receive is from one of these women. Should extra help be required, it rests with the Matron to order it. In view of the number of the nursing staff, it seems grim irony to read that the nurses are allowed time off for recreation every day "when possible"!

One of the Guardians (Mrs. Morris) has complained to the Board of the condition in which she found some of the children, on a visit to the Infirmary. In the case of one infant, its skin was "red, wrinkled and scalded, and it bore signs of great neglect." Had Mrs. Morris been a nurse, however, she would have known that a wrinkled skin in an infant is a sign of disease, not neglect, and would have hesitated, probably, to adopt the extraordinary line of reporting the condition of these children to the Inspector of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, before making her report to the Guardians and demanding a Local Government Board enquiry.

The report of the medical officer, Dr. D. J. Browne, states that two of the infants in question were suffering from congenital syphilis (which would certainly account for their condition). He further stated that the nursing staff was most efficient, "thoroughly competent in every respect, and most willing and anxious to discharge their difficult and laborious duties in the best possible manner."

We regret we have not space to quote from the reports of Nurse Annie E. Hayes, and of the Matron of the Workhouse, but the doctor's report, and his emphatic statement to the Board that he had visited the children daily since they had been in the Workhouse, and was satisfied with the treatment they were receiving, exonerated the nurses from the charge of "incompetence and wilful negligence," made by Mrs. Morris. Dr. Browne further stated that the children "might have been neglected, but that was before they came to the Workhouse, and not afterwards. The redness complained of was in consequence of constitutional disease, and not occasioned through neglect. It was not possible to prevent napkins used by very young children being wet at times."

The Board passed a resolution "that all the reports be forwarded to the Local Government Board, and that further action be left to the discretion of that Board." We hope that if an enquiry is held by the Local Government Board, the insufficiency of the nursing staff to the number of patients will be pointed out, and the nurses exonerated from any neglect of duty. We should be the last to uphold any bad nursing, but from the reports before us, it appears to us that, apart from the mistake of undertaking work impossible of performance, the Head Nurse is striving to fulfil her duty under circumstances of great difficulty.

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