

## The International Congress of Nurses.

### SUMMARY OF SESSION ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF HOSPITALS.

#### MALE AND FEMALE SUPERINTENDENTS.

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You will have gathered from my preceding remarks that I do not approve of "bosses." I do not. I hasten, therefore, to state that a salaried officer—who is practically absolute in every department of a hospital, lay, medical, and nursing—if one omits the perfunctory obedience to a Board of Managers, is not a bit to my taste. No such triune can maintain discipline, be it male or female. A lay "boss" has the combined medical and nursing influence associated together against him (as in the case of the now defunct General Directorship at the National Hospital), the medical "boss" is quite incapable of appreciating the resources of the fertile female brain—when on its mettle—and the nursing "boss" is looked upon as his natural enemy by every man of spirit in the institution. Let head officials have due authority in their own departments—lay, medical, or nursing. Let them studiously avoid an inch of trespass in their neighbours' domain, and let the Lay Committee govern.

Miss Banfield's paper touched on "Superintendents," but it is from personal experience that I have formed very strong opinions on this question of Supreme Beings—opinions which might not be so convincing to you as the following quotations.

#### "THE SUPERINTENDENT HIMSELF."

On September 10th to 12th of this year, the Association of Hospital Superintendents of the United States and Canada held their annual meeting in New York City, and a paper, admirable in many respects, was there read by Dr. C. Irving Fisher, Superintendent of the Presbyterian Hospital, New York, entitled, "The Superintendent Himself." Dr. Fisher says:

"The superintendent is the executive head of the hospital, the representative of the Board of Managers, under whom he has the general control of all departments and property, and to whom he is responsible for the good order of all its parts and the efficient service of all its officers and employees."

"The Spirit of the Hospital' should emanate from the Board, and by the superintendent, as agent, be received and transmitted to every officer and employee. If there is no such spirit, then the superintendent should by all the wisdom and tact within him strive to develop it on the highest lines possible, both in the Board and within the hospital.

"Let it not be understood that the superintendent is a mere tool. His own personality may and should be everywhere present. The intelligent knowledge of the

whole situation is with him only, and his manner of meeting his managers should be so frank and wise that they will be pleased to receive from him suggestions, confidently trustful of his judgment."

"When a new superintendent takes charge of an old or already organized hospital he sometimes finds, or thinks he does, certain rules or customs which will seriously hamper his control of persons and service. His past experience has been under a different organization, and one more in accord with generally accepted views of superintendents. His first impulse is to demand a change, giving him more authority, etc."

"The superintendent should be approachable by all associated with him. Every head of department should be so handled that it will be the most natural thing to come to him with all questions of doubt, all mistakes, all unusual incidents. Many an imminent trouble has been averted by timely suggestion thus made possible.

"To heads of departments and nurses I always say when they begin their duties, 'Don't forget my specialty—trouble of all sorts, and how to handle unpleasant people and things. Don't wait for the trouble to come, just tell me when you think it is coming, then is the time I can help you the most.' I have often seen the burden go out of the face of the young woman just taking charge of a ward for the first time, when this assurance has been given."

"I shall never forget the joy in the face of a head nurse to whom I had sent a note of approval for a work accomplished under certain trying and exacting conditions. Said she, 'You have no idea what that means to me, Dr. Fisher. I didn't know that you ever saw us working hard.' I wondered how many others had passed on unhelped for lack of my notice and word of approval."

"The world of the ordinary porter and scrubber is very narrow, and a pleasant personal notice by the superintendent means correspondingly more; also heads of departments will deal more carefully with employees whose good work has been observed by him. It is well to ask heads of departments who in their service are doing well, and who would be helped by a word of notice."

"Many are the human moods which come under the superintendent's touch. The nurse, who entered upon her course of training with purpose and hope, has been obliged to give it up, and is overwhelmed with disappointment and perchance a sense of disgrace because of her insufficiency.

"A few months ago a nurse came to my office, who had been obliged to leave our school because of inability to meet its exacting demands. She was directed to another hospital in which she succeeded. Speaking of her experience with us she said, 'The words which you said to me as I went out of this hospital three years ago have come to me often, and have helped me through many a trial.' She repeated a conversation which I could not recall, which suggests that the superintendent may be helping or disheartening others most when he least thinks of it.

"To recognise these various moods, to carry habitually an atmosphere of cheerfulness and of appreciative en-

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