

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
**THE NURSING RECORD**  
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 766.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 1902.

Vol. XXIX.

## Editorial.

### THE POOR LAW NURSING SERVICE.

The Report and recommendations of the Departmental Committee appointed by the President of the Local Government Board to inquire into the Nursing of the Sick Poor in Workhouses, and now issued in the form of a Blue Book, will be read with interest by those who are desirous of reform in the conditions under which the sick are cared for in these institutions. We propose to deal at length, in a further issue, with this important Report. Meanwhile, we are glad to be able to say that it includes many recommendations which, if carried out, should have the effect of removing some of the difficult conditions under which nurses in workhouses have at present to perform their professional duties, of improving the education of nurses under the Local Government Board, and, consequently, of raising the standard of nursing in the Poor Law Nursing Service.

The fundamental mistake in the Report is, of course, that it contains no recommendation as to the necessity for the formation of a Nursing Department at the Local Government Office, analogous to that now inaugurated at the War Office in connection with the Military Nursing Service, under the superintendence of a trained and experienced executive Nursing Officer. We cannot say we are surprised at this radical defect, as experienced nurses who gave evidence before the Committee intimated to us at the time that information on this point was not desired, but it is none the less disastrous. The essential basis of the better nursing of the sick poor in workhouses is the establishment of a central professional authority to deal with nursing in connection with the Local Government Board, and without it full effect cannot be given to the recommendations of the Committee, however excellent and desirable these may be. This fundamental mistake would no doubt have been avoided had an experienced

nurse been placed on the Committee. The terms of reference into which the Committee were desired to inquire and report were :—

1. As to any difficulties experienced in obtaining an adequate supply of properly qualified Nurses and Assistant Nurses, and how far these difficulties can be met.

2. What regulations, if any, should be made as to the qualifications and training of Probationers.

3. What amendment, if any, is desirable in the Regulations as to the qualification of Superintendent Nurses.

4. Whether any, and, if so, what, provision should be made for defining more strictly the respective duties of the Master and Matron of the Workhouse and of the Superintendent Nurse.

The Committee proceeded on the following lines :—

It considered Reports upon Poor Law Nursing sent in by the Board's General Inspectors.

It took oral evidence from a certain number of persons selected from the large number who offered to afford it when it became known that an inquiry was proceeding, including evidence on behalf of the Local Government Boards for Scotland and Ireland, various Poor Law and Nursing Associations, representatives of Boards of Guardians, Workhouse Medical Officers, Masters, Matrons and Nurses, and also from experts in nursing and hospital matters not directly connected with the Poor Law.

It considered a large number of written statements and petitions from experts in nursing and hospital matters not directly connected with the Poor Law.

The summary of the recommendations made shows that much careful consideration has been given to the evidence received.

The Report is signed by Mr. Grant Lawson, M.P. (Chairman of the Committee), and Mr. W. E. Knollys, C.B., Dr. A. H. Downes, and Mr. Andrew Fuller, the other members.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)