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## Editorial.

### WOMEN AS LUNACY COMMISSIONERS.

The important question of appointing women as Commissioners in Lunacy was discussed before the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded last Friday, when Dr. Marriott Cooke, one of the Commissioners, gave it as his opinion that the appointment of ladies in this capacity, or inspectors of asylums where women are treated, would be very undesirable. Neither did he think the appointment of Lady Superintendents in asylums desirable. They had, he asserted, been tried, but had not been generally successful. This, however, is not the opinion of all who have had practical experience in this matter. The question is so important that we propose to discuss it from the nursing standpoint, and in the first place we have no hesitation in saying that from the point of view of the nurses in asylums alone it is essential not only that there should be women as Commissioners in Lunacy, but also as Inspectors, as well as Lady Superintendents to supervise the nursing in asylums.

Over and over again it has been proved that for the good discipline of women their control must be in the hands of women, and, further, nurses are more likely to freely report or discuss with women inspectors many subjects which it is important should be brought to the knowledge of the authorities.

In regard to the patients a woman inspector would not only see, but be able to extract much more information on points of considerable importance concerning not only female, but male patients. Is it right, moreover, that female patients should be subjected to the indignity of detailed inspection by male Visitors? and in regard to domestic management, with which the

government of asylums is largely concerned, women inspectors would unquestionably be able to give advice and present reports to the Commissioners far exceeding in value any which can be offered by the male Visitors in Lunacy. Were it not for the intense conservatism of officials it would surely be obvious to the most prejudiced male mind that in regard to the domestic management of an institution the advice of women is invaluable.

We will undertake to say that if a woman trained in domestic economy, nursing, and sanitary science, were appointed as inspector, she could point out many things obvious enough to her which do not present themselves to the mind of man. In the interests then of patients and nurses, which are the interests of the public, the sooner the services of suitable women as Commissioners in Lunacy, as Inspectors, and as Lady Superintendents in all asylums, are secured, the better. Take the case of Colney Hatch, for instance, where the patients were locked in the wards during the night. The danger of this proceeding would have been obvious to the large majority of women.

As an instance of a male view of the first qualification for an asylum nurse, the chaplain of an asylum has recently publicly asserted that "physical fitness is of prime importance in choosing an asylum nurse." But while physical fitness is of importance in all nurses, for the efficient performance of their arduous duties, this alone can never be of primary importance, for mental and moral qualities rank as high, or higher, and in the case of the insane mental influence and supremacy is of paramount consequence, and has much more to do with good nursing and control of the insane than the finest animal physique. Surely we are leaving behind us the mischievous assumption that the insane must be governed by brute force.

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