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Editorial.

A MATTER OF JUSTICE.

We referred briefly in our issue of last week to a civil action brought by Dr. W. A. Isaac, of Molteno, Cape Colony, against Mrs. Alice Ridley, who has a private hospital in the same place. Dr. Isaac claimed damages, as well as a fee of £10, for professional services in connection with an operation case in Mrs. Ridley's home, and £2 2s. for the anaesthetist's fee, which fees were not contested by the defendant. He claimed damages on the ground that, owing to a disagreement, the defendant compelled him to dress an operation case suffering from small-pox, which up to that time she had satisfactorily dressed herself, he viewing the case from a window. Eventually this claim was withdrawn and judgment given for £12 2s., with costs.

The important point about the case is this, that Dr. Isaac, as a registered medical practitioner, and Mrs. Ridley, as a registered nurse, are both under the same professional authority—namely, the Cape Medical Council. What is the position of a medical practitioner or a nurse registered under this Council, who appeals to it where one or the other thinks he or she has cause for complaint? This is a contingency which must always be taken into consideration where such differences unfortunately occur. The medical practitioner appeals to an authority composed entirely of members of his own profession. The nurse appeals to an authority composed entirely of the professional colleagues of the superior officer who rightly or wrongly considers that he has a grievance against her. There is not on the Council, when it sits to discuss nursing matters whether educational

or disciplinary, a single nurse to bring forward the point of view of the nurse, and this, even though it may involve a matter of such supreme importance to her as the question of cancelling her certificate.

From a general standpoint, and not as considering the merits or de-merits of any particular case, we say unhesitatingly that on any tribunal to which medical practitioners and nurses must both appeal in regard to their professional conduct, nurses should be adequately and directly represented if it is to command confidence as being impartially and justly constituted. The sooner this is realised by the Cape Medical Council the better.

The nurses of Cape Colony had the honour of obtaining State Registration before any of their colleagues throughout the British Dominions, provision for such registration being made in connection with the Medical and Pharmacy Act of the Cape of Good Hope in 1891. The Act has been of considerable value in regard to the maintenance of educational standards, but the difficulties and complications likely to arise in regard to nurses, in connection with the disciplinary duties entailed upon the Medical Council, were not so well understood then as now, although eight years ago, a leading Superintendent of Nurses in Cape Colony, pointed out in this Journal the disabilities from which nurses suffered, owing to lack of representation on their Governing Body. We hope that the Cape Medical Council will realise the need for further organisation, and that the nurses of Cape Colony will not rest until they have secured that representation of their interests on their Governing Body, when it meets to discuss nursing questions, to which they are assuredly entitled.

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