

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

ETHEL GORDON FENWICK, S.R.N., HON. EDITOR 1888—1947.

No. 2219. Vol. 101.

JULY, 1953.

Price Sevenpence.

Editorial.

EFFICIENCY DETHRONED.

THE DETERMINED POLICY to remove from the jurisdiction of Hospital Matrons the Kitchen and Catering departments, it will be noted, is now having its repercussions to the detriment of all concerned.

The deterioration and dissatisfaction now prevailing in some hospitals has brought the Minister of Health to issue a Pamphlet on "Hygiene in Hospital Catering Departments," drawing attention to standards of cleanliness and stating:—

"The risks of infection often found in hospitals and the outbreaks of food poisoning which have occurred, underline the need for continuing care.

"Cleanliness in the preparation, storage and service of food is the responsibility of the Catering Officer or other officer in charge of catering, but as an additional precaution the Minister suggests that Boards of Governors and Hospital Management Committees should designate a member of the senior medical staff at each hospital to advise the Board or Committee on hygiene in kitchen wards, dining rooms and stores, and to give guidance to the Catering Officer. To carry out this responsibility, it will be necessary for the Medical Officer to make frequent inspections of the catering arrangements, including service and storage."

It will be noted that the instructions in the latter paragraph were previously in the Matron's province, and which are now placed in the Medical Officers' hands!

It is since taking away the authority of the Matron in this domestic department that conditions have gradually reached the present unsatisfactory state of affairs, for the simple reason that in the past these ladies were trained on the principles laid down by Florence Nightingale, the greatest teacher in the practical application of Hygienic methods the world has ever known.

It was this realistic system, practised in ward and domestic work that was so largely instrumental in the creation of the great institutions of healing which our hospitals became; a system under which such disasters as food poisoning were rarely, if ever, traced to the kitchen department.

In their onerous work, we wonder how many of these officers, past and present, have not become reluctantly aware of the envious desire of officialdom to deprive the Nursing Profession of the initiative in such departments as the one in question!

Yes, the officialdom which Florence Nightingale fought so courageously is at large! But what are our hundreds of Matrons doing to save their prestige? That is the question!!!

This very serious matter was considered by Fellows and Members of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., at their Annual General Meeting, when the following letter and Resolution was unanimously agreed:

"To THE RIGHT HON. IAIN MACLEOD,
MINISTER OF HEALTH.

"Dear Sir,

"At the Annual General Meeting of Fellows and Members of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., held on 17th June, 1953, the proposal of the Minister of Health, published in his pamphlet 'Hygiene in Hospital Catering Departments' was strongly deprecated, and in view of the very unsatisfactory conditions increasingly evident as a result of the gradual introduction of this policy, it was unanimously agreed that the following Resolution be sent to the Minister:

RESOLUTION

"That the Fellows and Members of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., in Annual General Meeting assembled unanimously beseech the Minister of Health to restore to the Hospital Matrons' province the administration of Hospital Kitchens and Catering Departments which were originally hers."

This Journal has always stood for the policy that the Matron is the rightful person to control the nursing and domestic departments of hospital life.

We do not, therefore, apologise for quoting from an editorial which appeared in the Journal forty years ago, when a movement was on foot to transfer the control of the kitchen from the Matron to the steward:

"We have no hesitation in saying that the control of the domestic department should always be in the hands of the Matron, and that the best interests of any institution will be conserved thereby.

"The strongest points in favour of the control of the kitchen being in the hands of the Matron are that both discipline and economy demand it.

"The large female staff in the kitchen should be under the control of a woman officer, and that officer the Matron, for the discipline of the female staff can never be maintained by a male official, as it can be by the Matron of the institution. Moreover, the wards, the Home and the kitchen are so interdependent that the introduction of dual control must tend to produce friction.

"Again, on the score of economy, it is obvious that the Matron can exercise a closer supervision, and therefore check waste with greater facility than a steward, and we have known of instances in which the management of the domestic department has been transferred from the steward of a large hospital to the Matron with great advantage."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)