

Workhouse Infirmary Nursing.

IT has been suggested to us that it would be well to place on record in these pages the full text of the important memorial recently presented to the Local Government Board by the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association, and we have much pleasure in so doing. The memorial and its appendices were as follows:—

To the Rt. Hon. President of the Local Government Board.

6, Adam Street, Strand, W.C.,
May, 13th. 1893.

SIR,—We, the undersigned members of the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association beg to draw the attention of the Board to the demands arising out of the recent growth of sick Nursing in the workhouses and infirmaries under the control of the Board. This systematic care of the sick is the result of the attention which is now given to all questions affecting the care of the community, and we would respectfully point out that from this cause it seems that the duties of the officers concerned, and their responsibilities towards the sick and each other are not accurately defined.

In connection with the Metropolitan Infirmaries marked improvement has followed on the various measures adopted by the Local Government Board, but we venture to draw your attention to other matters in which further regulation seems desirable:

(a) The position of the Matron is not sufficiently defined:

1. With regard to the Master and Matron of the Workhouse, where the Infirmary is part of the same-building.
2. With relation to the control of the Nurses:
3. With relation to her responsibility in supervising the Nursing Department.

If the Matron is the controlling official of Trained Nurses, it follows that she also should be trained; and yet in some of the Metropolitan Infirmaries the Matron is untrained.

The appointment of a Trained Matron would also be a step in the direction of utilising the Metropolitan Infirmaries as Training Schools for Probationers; until this is the custom in all the separate Infirmaries in the Metropolis or the provinces, the quality and quantity of Nurses available for Poor-law work must always be inadequate.

(b) The chronic and infirm cases in the Metropolitan Workhouse wards:

In all the Metropolitan workhouses there are wards for the reception of such cases, and to some of the wards cases of emergency, such as accidents, or acute illnesses, have been admitted; such wards are to be deprecated, but where they exist there should always be an adequate number of Trained Nurses under a Trained Superintendent.

Turning now to the Provincial Infirmaries; or the sick wards in the Workhouses; these vary from the well-appointed Infirmary organised for its work, with its Superintendent Nurse and staff of day and night Nurses, to the small ward in the Workhouses with its untrained attendant, supplemented by a pauper help, dependent on paupers for night nursing.

1. The Nursing of the sick inmates by Trained Nurses

only; the services of paupers being confined to scrubbing and cleaning.

2. The provision of proper Nursing for the sick during the night.

3. The importance of placing a Trained Superintendent Nurse in those Infirmaries where three or more Nurses are employed.

4. The total separation of the sick from the able-bodied, by placing them in separate buildings.

5. The careful separation of the *lock* patients from the other patients, and provision for their effective Nursing.

6. The provision of expeditious and efficient means of calling aid, either medical or administrative, in the night.

7. The adoption by the Guardians of rules for the guidance of the Nursing department. (See Appendix B.)

8. The formulation by the Local Government Board of rules regulating the number of Nurses employed per bed, based on Dr. Downes' recommendation. (See Appendix C.)

9. The appointment of a few women inspectors, especially with a view to supervising the Nursing department in Infirmaries and Workhouses.

We think that the time has now come when the cause of Sick Nursing would be forwarded by an order from the Local Government Board to the Boards of Guardians. The urgency for reform in these matters has been brought to our notice through our connection with the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association; this society has been working on the subject for fourteen years, during which time it has provided 491 Nurses for Workhouse Infirmaries, of whom 190 have been trained at its own expense, and at the present time it has 122 Nurses at work in the Infirmaries and 37 Probationers in training. The Society is in constant touch with these Nurses scattered all over the country, and is fully acquainted with the many difficulties under which they are carrying on their work.

We respectfully urge the Local Government Board to take into its immediate consideration the urgent questions dealt with in this memorial; and we beg leave to subscribe ourselves,

Yours faithfully,

(Signed by)

H. R. H. Princess Christian of Schleswig Holstein.
H. R. H. Princess Mary Adelaide, Duchess of Teck.
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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)