

are all of one class—and mostly of one age—where all have a natural tendency to depression in consequence of their fallen estate as the waifs and strays of humanity; where lectures are unknown and scientific inquiry is smothered by red tape. The wonder, therefore, is not that Workhouse Nursing is at so low an ebb, but that, as the term is now understood, there should be any Nursing in these Infirmaries at all. We cannot leave the past history of this subject without expressing our admiration of the great and successful efforts made by the present Matrons of the Chelsea, the Kensington, the Birmingham New, and other Infirmaries, in the face of the greatest difficulties, to bring about a better system in their several Institutions. And the efforts of Miss TWINING and of the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association in the same direction also deserve the most cordial recognition and praise.

Turning now from causes to results, from the past to the present, we find, as might have been expected, three flagrant defects in the Nursing Department of these Infirmaries. There are, in most, too few trained Nurses—even, in some cases, no trained Nurses at all. There is, in comparatively few Poor Law Institutions, a thoroughly trained Nurse as Matron. Where there is a professional head, her authority over the female workers is strictly subordinate to that of the Medical Superintendent. With reference to the first point, an excellent illustration is furnished by an account of a recent inquest, which appears in another column this week. Attention was there incidentally drawn to the fact that the Nurse was expected to attend to 63 patients during the night, and the full significance of this appears not to have been realised by the coroner or the jury whose indignation was aroused, however, by the fact that the Nurse had to work for 12 hours at a stretch.

The importance of the second point need not, we presume, be dilated upon, at any length, because it is obvious that if the attendants upon sick paupers are to be trained Nurses, it becomes almost essential that their Superintendent shall also be a

thoroughly-trained worker. Otherwise, it would not only be impossible for any efficient supervision to be exercised over the work of the Nurses—which sooner or later would mean disorganization—but there would also be a total absence of discipline owing to the impossibility of the Matron giving orders on technical matters with which she was unacquainted, or receiving obedience from subordinates who would, to all intents and purposes, be entirely independent of, and irresponsible to, her in the discharge of their duties. It is, however, needful to call attention to this matter, because the attempt has been made in various Infirmaries to carry out a fusion between the old and the new—the Matron being a Mrs. Bumble of the ancient days, the subordinate, a modern trained Nurse. Or—as in some Institutions has been the case—a semi-reform has been commenced by appointing a trained Nurse as the Matron, leaving the pauper helps to represent the Nursing Staff. Neither plan has succeeded in any case with which we are acquainted. The first is as absurd as it would be to place a tailor to control a Medical College; the second is as hopeless as it would be to cut off a skilled mechanic's arms and then direct him to perform some delicate manual work—the sentient brain and the full desire might be there, but the physical dexterity would be absent.

The third point is one upon which there have been, and certainly might be, some differences of opinion. But, if it be conceded that the female staff are all to be professional women, it would be greatly to their advantage, in every way, that they should be placed under the direct control of a woman. In other Institutions this principle has been fully accepted for many years. As regards the Poor Law Infirmaries, for reasons into which we need not enter, and which, indeed, we find it difficult to comprehend, the adoption of this rule has been repeatedly urged, even by leading officials in the Department; but we believe that we are correct in stating that, up to the present time, it has not been accepted, and it has most certainly not been acted upon.

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