

and that they, therefore, suggested the advisability of her resignation.

The Guardians discussed this report at some length—it being incidentally mentioned that she be permitted to hear what is said against her, and absence, which, if it be a fact, we cannot regard as evidence against the Matron was taken in her creditable to the Committee, for it is a very elementary matter of justice that an accused person should so be enabled to defend herself. Then the Matron was called before the Board, and, after some conversation, the following important colloquy took place, which we quote from our contemporary the *Lewisham Gazette* :—

“The Chairman : We must have a statement from you that you will, in all respects, conform to his (the Medical Superintendent’s) wishes. Do you understand ?

The Matron : Yes, I understand, quite ; but must I conform to his authority when I believe his statement to be untrue ?

The Chairman : I am afraid it must be unquestioning submission for the time being. It is for you to decide, after what I have told you of the resolution which the Board have in view.

The Matron : Am I to submit to a direction which I believe to be wrong ?

The Chairman : I am afraid there must be submission in every direction, even though it appears to be contrary to common sense.

The Matron : That is a position I don’t think any reasoning being should be asked to hold.

The Chairman : We are not *asking* you to do this ; we are only putting before you our decision.

The Matron : I am asked whether I will accept and carry out the Medical Superintendent’s instructions if they are reasonable or unreasonable, whether right or wrong. Certainly not.

The Matron retired. The Board divided, and the Matron was suspended from duty by eleven votes to three. She has appealed to the Local Government Board for an inquiry into the whole matter, and has declined, until that has been held, to resign her post.

We express, for the present, no opinion upon this particular case, but it raises a most important question to which we must refer. By old standing Regulations, the Matron in the Poor Law Infirmaries is subordinate entirely to the Medical Superintendent. Thanks to the admirable manner in which these gentlemen almost invariably discharge their duties, this anomalous state of affairs has rarely led to a public scandal. But it is notorious in the Nursing world that the system opens the door to the most scandalous abuses, and that in the case of young unmarried men thus placed in almost autocratic authority over a number of women, who are therefore made dependent upon his goodwill for their future professional success and livelihood, there have occurred not only absolute lack of discipline and consequent detriment to the welfare of the patients, but even worse results.

The old rule was quite necessary when the

Nursing was done by pauper helps—the untrained Matron was of necessity under the absolute authority of the Medical Superintendent. There can be no dispute, however, that a body of such women as the Nurses of an Infirmary are at the present day should be under the control of a woman, and certainly not under that of a man. The Lewisham, or any other, Board of Guardians, who attempt to enforce the Regulation now, are taking upon themselves a responsibility which is terribly grave.

We are convinced that no trained Nurse and gentlewoman should accept the position of Matron of a Poor Law Infirmary under such a degrading condition. We sincerely hope that the outcome of the Local Government Board inquiry into this case will be to persuade the Board to issue new Regulations more in accordance with the altered conditions of modern Nursing—to give the Matron the sole authority over the Nursing Staff, subject to the Board of Guardians and responsible to them alone ; to make the Matron responsible to the Medical Superintendent for the efficient performance of the Nursing, and of his directions concerning the care, of the patients. But nothing more.

ELECTRIC ACCIDENTS.

Considerable surprise and no little alarm has been caused during recent years by various accidents which have occurred in the streets of London and of other towns, and which have been found to be due to the escape of the electric current from the earth. Quite recently, a horse fell down dead in the streets, and the driver who went to its head was also affected by an electric shock. Almost immediately afterwards a violent explosion of gas occurred which tore up the roadway for some distance around. There have been various theories suggested to account for these occurrences. But so far, no attention has been called to the most obvious explanation of all. It is a well-known fact that there are a large number of chemicals in the soil, and that the electric current possesses the power, in its passage through such soil, of decomposing the chemical compounds which it contains. For example, the salts of ammonia, potash and soda in the ground would be broken up by a current of electricity into their constituent acids and bases. The acid which is freed by this decomposition would certainly attack and corrode any iron pipes containing gas and water in its vicinity ; and this corrosion, by setting the contained gas free, while the iron pipes themselves would act as a transmitter of the electric current, would cause all the phenomena to which attention has been called—the sudden discharge of electricity on the surface and the explosion of gas. Of course, this accident can only occur after the insulating material, in which the electric wires are contained, has been itself rendered permeable so that the current can escape into the earth. This, however, is an accident which very frequently occurs, as every one can see for himself, any day, in the streets of London where gangs of men are employed in drawing through various man-holes long coils of insulated wire in order to discover the point at which a leak has occurred, and through which the current has escaped.

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