

Nursing Echoes.

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A SPECIAL Meeting of the Matrons' Council took place at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, on Thursday the 28th inst., Miss Isla Stewart, Matron, in the chair.

WE are glad to learn that Miss Pattison, the Matron of the Lewisham Infirmary, has resumed her duties, and think she has acted most wisely in quietly returning to the Infirmary, as she is legally entitled to do, and in trusting to the good sense of the Guardians to conform to the advice of the Local Government Board, that she should be reinstated.

"The Lewisham Scandal" continues to be widely discussed both in the local press and amongst Nurses. Our readers will doubtless remember that after the opening of the new Infirmary in June last, friction arose between the Matron and the Medical Superintendent—which is inevitable in every Poor Law Infirmary where the Medical Superintendent acts up to the letter of his Regulations. There can be no doubt that, in the future as in the past, discord and disorganisation will occur in these institutions until the Regulations are altered in accordance with justice and common sense, and the Matron is permitted to perform her duty according to her experience and even her conscience, and not at the absolute command of a Medical Superintendent—who in many instances is both young and inexperienced—and whether she believes the command to be right or wrong. We repeat here what we have stated before, that such autocratic authority on the part of any man over the female staff and over the domestic affairs of any public institution is productive of grave abuses which are quite destructive of discipline and efficient working.

In consequence of the friction at the Lewisham Infirmary, the Matron was suspended for insubordination by the Board of Guardians, and because she would not promise to obey the Medical Superintendent "whether she considered his directions right or wrong." And nothing surprised the public more than that the Chairman—a Canon of the Church of England

—should publicly state that this was the actual demand made by the Board upon its Matron. The Matron refused to resign as requested, and very wisely appealed, as she had a right to do, to the Local Government Board for an Inquiry. This Inquiry was held, and "after careful consideration to the evidence and to the report" the Local Government Board stated, "they have therefore determined to defer their decision in the case for a period of six months, removing in the meantime the Matron's suspension and allowing her to resume her duties." Against this decision the Lewisham Guardians appealed, and upon this they have, for the last two months, been wrangling.

The Infirmary Committee reported at the last meeting of the Board on Friday that after consideration of the whole of the circumstances attendant upon the suspension of the Matron, and the subsequent inquiry of the Local Government Board, they were of opinion that, prior to her re-instatement, if the Board should so decide, Miss Pattison should be called upon to revoke in writing her refusal of November 15th last to obey the Medical Superintendent's orders, and also to give an undertaking that she would in the future loyally carry out all orders of the Medical Superintendent and the Guardians.

The Rev. Dr. Marshall recalled the conversation which had taken place between the Matron and the Chairman at the time of her suspension, in which she was asked to obey the orders of the Medical Officer whether right or wrong, and naively asked "was it not possible the Matron felt her moral sense insulted?" It was ultimately agreed after some discussion and upon the resolution of Mr. Brown, "to support the Committee's recommendation and uphold the discipline of the institution," that the Matron be requested to revoke in writing her refusal to obey the Medical Superintendent's orders whether right or wrong. We have no hesitation in saying that such a demand is absolutely unjustifiable and unprecedented; that no public body has either a legal or a moral right to extort from any of its officials such an abnegation of the first principles of human responsibility, and we imagine that few gentlewomen would ever comply with such an extraordinary demand.

We are pleased to report that the two Assistant Matrons, Miss Campbell and Miss Mill, who have proved themselves most trustworthy officials during their term of office at Lewisham Infirmary, have, upon reconsideration, been reinstated by the Board of Guardians. Nothing could have been more unjust than to have called for the resignation of these ladies—

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