

staff of five Nurses to sixty patients, or thereabouts. Now, it will be at once admitted that while this average of Nursing is considerably below that which is required, and indeed given, in most General Hospitals, the circumstances of Poor Law Infirmaries are so diverse that it is possible—considering the number of chronic cases who are treated in the wards of a Workhouse Infirmary, as compared with the different class of cases in the wards of a General Hospital—that it may not be necessary to have as high a numerical standard of Nurses employed in the former as in the latter institutions. And, moreover, so high an opinion is universally entertained of the ability and knowledge of Dr. Downes, especially upon Nursing questions, that the estimate which he has made in this matter will be widely accepted; but it is equally beyond dispute that no expert would advise or be satisfied with a lower numerical standard of attendants, even in Workhouse Infirmaries, than that suggested by Dr. Downes.

The next point to which he drew attention in this conference was that the old and obsolete system of permanent Night Nurses is still in force at this Infirmary, and he asked the Committee to note that this system is open to grave objections, and is being generally discontinued. Finally, he called attention to the facts that the deaths in the Holborn Workhouse actually outnumbered the deaths in the Infirmary; that the retention of helpless bedridden cases in Workhouses was opposed to the spirit of legislation ever since 1867; that such cases were the most deserving of skilled Nursing, and that the Holborn Workhouse was one of the very few now in the metropolis which retains such cases in such large numbers. The importance of Dr. Downes' comments and suggestions not only to the sick paupers of Holborn, but also to the good management of its Infirmary, can hardly be exaggerated. It is, therefore, with surprise which will be shared by most Nurses that we learn that the Medical Superintendent of the Holborn Infirmary stated that the present Nursing Staff of the Infirmary was, in his opinion, sufficient for the present requirements; and that the Matron also reported that the Nurses in her department "will compare most favourably with those in other similar institutions," while in corroboration of her belief she inferred that the twelve permanent Night Nurses now on duty are quite sufficient for the nursing of the 660 beds in the Infirmary during the night. The Special Committee of the Board which inquired into this matter evidently acted upon the opinion of its Medical Superintendent and its Matron and reported—

"That in the opinion of the Committee no alteration is necessary in the present system

of Nursing arrangements at the Infirmary, inasmuch as no complaint has been made either by the public or the patients as to the inadequacy or quality of the Nursing staff." A minority, however, of the Committee have made a report and recommendations with which we cordially concur. They agree with Dr. Downes—and wisely so—that the Nursing staff of the Infirmary is insufficient, and urge that it should be increased from forty-two in number to fifty-six, an increase, that is to say, of one-third; that no one should be appointed as Charge Nurse who has had less than three years' training in a general Hospital or Infirmary; that no one should be appointed as Assistant Nurse who has not had at least one year's general training; that the system of permanent night Nurses should be discontinued; that the scale of salaries of the Nurses should be raised; and that further accommodation for them should be provided by the acquisition of new premises. With these recommendations all who desire to see the Nursing of our Poor Law Infirmaries organized upon modern lines, will cordially agree, and we regard it as a most encouraging fact that Guardians of the Poor should evince so clear a knowledge of the requirements of their Nursing departments as to enunciate such recommendations as those to which we have referred.

MURDEROUS MATCHES.

THE strike of the match manufacturers in France has drawn attention once again (let us hope to some purpose) to the homicidal character of this industry—an industry sanctioned and supported in France by government. No one who has witnessed the sufferings of the unfortunate men and women, poisoned by their daily toil, can dwell on the *preventable* nature of the horror without indignation, or reflect without contempt on the value of a civilisation that sanctions slow torment and death for a large class of industrious workers, who are more or less certainly doomed to what an eloquent French writer terms "the slow and hideous death, with refinements of atrocious torture that make one shudder to think of." "After all," remarks Monsieur Gautier, with terrible irony, "whether they die of starvation doing nothing, or whether they work and perish of necrosis, what does it signify?" Forty years ago (1856) the question of manufacturing less deadly matches was brought before the Superior Council of Hygiene by Tardieu. It was pointed out that a match, almost equally valuable from an industrial point of view, could be manufactured. And today we write 1895, and the manufacture is still killing the manufacturers. In Belgium (and various other countries) matches that burn easily are manufactured without sulphur or phosphorus, and there can be no valid reason why similar materials should not be utilised in France.

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