

she receives a note from the M. S. (like Philip II. of Spain's M. S.'s are very fond of writing official notes to some one who is in the next room), requesting her not to take the Nurses from their work; she gives a Nurse extra time off duty—she is again called to order; she allows a Nurse with a sick headache to lie down for a few hours—how dares she—without consulting the doctor; she tells the Nurse that she objects to see patients waiting on one another—she is again requested not to interfere in the ward management; she alters the time for scrubbing the back staircases—his lordship would prefer it to be changed back again; she tells an impertinent scullery-maid she will have to leave—she has again exceeded her authority; she says the Nurses are to come to prayers—the Medical Superintendent tells them they need not unless they wish to—he will give them permission to stay away. It is he, not the Matron, who arranges the holidays; he, not the Matron, who grants late leave; it is, in short, from him, and not the Matron, that their general management and control emanates, and the Nurses know it, and know it well. And it is this incessant interference with what she has been rightly taught to look upon as her legitimate sphere of authority that makes the position of a Workhouse Infirmary Matron so unsatisfactory and difficult, and that dwarfs her efforts for a more enlightened Nursing policy.

The Matron, both by her sex and special training, is unquestionably far better suited than the Medical Superintendent to enforce discipline and maintain a proper healthy tone among the Nurses and female servants of the Institution, for she knows, as he can never know, their real needs; because, as Florence Nightingale says, with her usual practical wisdom, in disciplinary matters, none but a woman can understand a woman; and the Local Government Board so far acknowledges this fact that they have impressed on Boards of Guardians the desirability of appointing ladies as Matrons who have received a thorough Hospital training, and are capable of carrying out the duties of a Matron. This includes, presumably, that exercise of judicious authority over the nursing staff and female servants, which is usual in well-regulated Hospitals. Yet the Matron's rules are worded in such a manner that she really holds all her authority over her subordinates on the suffrage of the Medical Superintendent, whose wishes and orders can always over-ride hers, who can undermine her authority in any matter, and to whom the Nurses can, and do, appeal against her decisions.

Right or wrong, weak or strong, foolish or clever, the Matron has in every trivial detail, in every trifling matter, to defer to him and submit to his judgment, though she knows he may be incompetent to deal with the matter on hand.

I have heard an Infirmary Matron of much

ability remark, that the one thing she could venture to do with perfect impunity was—Nothing; in doing that she was quite safe. Thus deprived of all her legitimate authority, the Matron either shrinks to a resigned nonentity and submits to the evils she is powerless to remedy, or she struggles and fights and runs her head against the inevitable Local Government Act brick wall, and is considered a cantankerous woman, bad tempered and difficult to work with; she is labelled, like the picture in the French child's Natural History book, *Cet animal est très méchant, quand on l'attaque il se défend*. Now, I have a peculiar and abiding sympathy with that animal who defends what it truly believes to be right and common sense against unequal odds, and cannot be brought to understand that law and equity are not the same things.

This three-cornered position in which the Medical Officer, the Matron, and the Nursing Staff find themselves, is forced upon them by law, and as long as the law remains constituted as at present, so long the Matron can only take her proper place by a compromise or mutual arrangement. Legally, the medical man remains the responsible official for every department in the Infirmary. Is not his weekly report book loaded with interesting items about the leave, the illness, the arrival, or the misbehaviour of Nurses or servants? Given a conscientious Medical Superintendent and he will consider it his duty to look after the Matron and her department; and, given a conscientious and highly-trained Matron and she will resent such supervision—and resent it bitterly, now and always—and with every trained Matron appointed the same position will be bound to cause friction and will continue to do so until the law is altered. Legally, the Medical Superintendent may stand on his rights, but, morally and ethically, he is in a wrong and a false position, and there will not be peace in Israel until that wrong is righted.

Twenty years ago things were very different; the doctor wielded supreme control over half a dozen old women, often addicted to drink. He may then have been in his proper place, but even the most advanced asserter of men's rights can hardly suggest that he is in his proper place as the despotic master of twenty or forty young women and their so-called head—a woman whose training and education fully entitle her to be so in reality. All large Infirmarys, now-a-days, desire to train their own Nurses—that a school of teaching improves the quality of nursing work and the stamp of Nurse employed is very generally acknowledged—but one of the most essential points in a Nurse-Training School is, that the Superintendent shall herself be a trained Nurse, not only capable of governing and managing her subordinates, but with the power to do so, and that power she should hold direct from the governing body of the Hospita

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