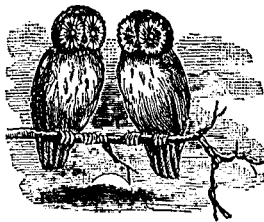


modation for over 200 persons, is a centre of happiness during the winter season when regular entertainments—theatrical and musical—are held, to which the convalescents and all who are fit are invited to come and enjoy themselves to their heart's content. And now I understand what my cheery stout friend meant when she said, "And the theayter and the chapel and the beef-tea's just lovely." We felt but one regret in leaving this magnificent Institution, that as yet, with the exception of the talented Lady Superintendent, Miss Charlotte Bann, the Nursing staff have not awakened to a sense of *professional* duty and become members of the Nursing body corporate, thereby co-operating with their progressive metropolitan and colonial sisters to obtain the benefits of professional and legal status for thoroughly-trained Nurses. With such an inspiring environment as work in this great Hospital must possess, and which has developed in its Nursing staff, devotion to the sick and institutional *esprit de corps*, we feel sure the day is not far distant when a sense of *public* duty will also be developed, and the reproach of indifference to the common good of their profession will be removed from the Nursing staff of the Liverpool Royal Infirmary."

Matrons in Council.

SECOND CONFERENCE.

DISCUSSION UPON MISS MOLLETT'S PAPER.—THE POSITION OF THE MATRON IN POOR LAW INFIRMARIES.



Mrs. FENWICK, who, in the absence through indisposition of the Chairman, Miss ISLA STEWART, presided, said that the question which was chiefly raised in Miss MOLLETT'S paper was one of vital importance. The improvements that had within the last decade been effected in Poor Law Infirmarys gave encouragement for still greater improvements in the future. But during those years there had been a gradually growing dissatisfaction expressed in connection with the organisation and management of the Nursing staff, solely owing to the fact that the present positions of the Medical Superintendent and the Matron as defined by the Local Government Board, were unjust and anomalous. A woman is better qualified than a man, both physically and mentally, to control the domestic arrangements of a house; Nature intended her to be, in its widest sense, "the mother of the household." The fact is admitted everywhere but in our State Hospitals, because there alone a man is placed by law in that position, and the Medical Superintendent is made into a Matron. (Much laughter.) Justice is the basis of good government; but the present regulations in Poor Law Infirmarys were unjust. The Matron was placed in a false position; and often, in order to gain what she wanted, she was compelled to resort to subterfuge or "tact." The Medical Officer was placed in a false position by the great variety of his extra-scientific duties. It was impossible for him to superintend the scrubbers, to scold the cook, to inspect the laundry, and to report at length concerning

these matters to the Guardians, and at the same time to devote that care to the sick, the need for which, after all, was the reason of his existence in the Institution. Every one was ready to admit that in the olden times it was essential that the Medical Superintendent should, as the only educated official in the Infirmary, be the supreme head. Now, with immensely altered conditions, the system was obsolete. It was working badly. It was causing endless friction everywhere. It was detrimental to the very progress of Infirmary Nursing by keeping the best class of Nurses away from the work. If the Local Government Board desired to improve the Nursing under the Poor Law, they must go to the root of the matter. They must revise the obsolete Orders and define the duties of the Matron so clearly that thoroughly-trained Nurses should be encouraged to enter rather than repelled from this branch of work.

Miss CATHERINE WOOD said her experience had been mainly amongst Country and not Metropolitan Infirmarys; and a Matron's position in the former was different from that in the latter. In the country, where the Infirmary is not a separate Institution, the Master is made supreme; and the question before the Council was the relation of the Matron to the Medical Superintendent. She thought they would find many Matrons present who would be able to give a very different picture of their position to that depicted by Miss Mollett.

Miss WILD said that from her experience she could not agree with Miss Mollett. There must be a spirit of "give and take" on both sides. Tact, which is as rare as common-sense, was wanted.

The Matron of St. Olave's Infirmary said that she had had her own way in regard to the scrubbers and female staff. Medical Superintendents, she found, only required a little management—that was all. (Laughter.)

The CHAIRMAN then rose to order, and said the audience must keep in mind that what Miss Mollett had criticized was the present state of the law; it was the law which was unjust. No one desired to call in question the action of individual Matrons or of individual Medical Superintendents. Given an amiable, tactful, and pleasant Matron, there was no doubt the superior officer would reciprocate those virtues. But it should be remembered that he, in deputing the supreme control of the female staff to the Matron, was not fulfilling his duty according to the letter of the law. That was a state of things which many desired to alter.

Miss DE PLEDGE (Matron of the Chelsea Infirmary) said that where the Medical Superintendent and Matron got on well together, it was due to the tact of both parties. But for harmony to depend so entirely upon tact was surely not satisfactory. There are very many excellent Medical Superintendents, but there would certainly continue to be friction in some Institutions unless the relations between the Superintendent and the Matron were altered.

Miss BAKER asked if the Local Government Board had not granted the Matron of the Lewisham Infirmary increased powers when she took office. She had understood from Dr. Downes that this was the case.

No one answering the question immediately, Dr. HARRIS, Medical Superintendent of the Dulwich Infirmary, was called upon to give his views. He said that he did not feel disposed to express an opinion

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)