

and certainly to the disadvantage of the sick poor. As we have said, therefore, on previous occasions, it appears to us to be necessary that the Regulations of the Nursing Departments of Poor Law Infirmaries should be completely revised, and brought more into conformity with the modern conditions of the work. We feel confident that in this expression of opinion we shall have the approval both of the Local Government Board and also of the great majority of Medical Superintendents. All the recent rescripts of the Board have tended in the direction of impressing on Boards of Guardians the necessity of improving the Nursing in the sick wards under their particular control, and on previous occasions we have received many and flattering communications from Medical Superintendents, expressing their sympathy with our comments and their desire for improvements in the Nursing of their own Infirmaries. Our contemporary, the *British Medical Journal*, has done a great public and professional service by the investigations which it has so excellently carried out into the condition of the patients and of the Nursing arrangements in English Workhouses. The chief moral which underlies the important facts which our contemporary has elicited seems to be that a system of regular inspection of these institutions is necessary for the public welfare. At the same time it may be assumed that it would be for the benefit both of the sick poor and also of the ratepayers if greater efficiency were introduced into the domestic departments of the Infirmaries. This latter matter, indeed, is one to which too little attention has hitherto been paid, but it is an aspect of the question which will doubtless appeal to many who now find cause of complaint in the rapidly increasing expenses of the Poor Law. And it is a matter also which will carry due weight with the Local Government Board, for it would not be too much to say that greater efficiency in the management of the domestic department of Infirmaries would be synonymous with greater economy. At the present time, the overworked inspectors of the Local Government Board visit all the Infirmaries from time to time, but these gentlemen would probably agree with us that there are many domestic matters in such institutions into which inquiry should be made, but which are difficult, if not impossible, for a man to investigate. It is generally admitted by all who have worked in these institutions that the very monotony of the daily routine tends to lessen any stringent supervision over the domestic details. Nothing, indeed, except some outside stimulus will maintain constant interest in the work and continual efforts to reach a higher standard of efficiency.

Our suggestion, therefore, to the Local

Government Board, would be that it should make a new departure and appoint some thoroughly trained Nurses as Infirmary Inspectors. The great advantage to which we should look forward if this suggestion were carried out would undoubtedly consist in the introduction into many Poor Law Infirmaries of a better system of management than at present exists. The work, as we have said, is so monotonous and so destitute of the interest and incentives with which Hospital Nursing is surrounded, that the external stimulus would undoubtedly prove most valuable; and this would therefore certainly be welcomed by many of the most progressive Matrons as well as by many Medical Superintendents. It would be also a great advantage to the local Guardians to have an independent observer investigating and reporting upon the efficiency of their Infirmary. Furthermore, it would probably lead many of the best class Nurses to undertake work in the Poor Law service, if it were understood that they would thereby become eligible for such Inspectorships. Those who have had practical experience of the working of an Infirmary would certainly be the best fitted to inspect and discover both the good and the evil existing in the Nursing departments of such Institutions. It is beyond dispute, and indeed it has been shown by most trustworthy observers, that the employment of trained Nurses in an Infirmary leads to a very marked saving both of appliances and of dressings, as well as of alcoholic stimulants, all of which are liable to be wasted, not only by the self-consumption of the latter on the part of "pauper helps," but also by the ignorance and reckless carelessness of such persons, many of whom have become paupers from their inherent extravagance—a fact which in itself should furnish a strong argument against their being entrusted with the use and disposal of expensive appliances and equally expensive dressings.

We hope through the coming winter to present to our readers, from time to time, summarised accounts of the Nursing departments of the leading metropolitan and provincial Infirmaries, and of the Nursing arrangements in vogue at those workhouses which are still wanting in separate Infirmary accommodation. There is reason to hope that definite efforts will soon be made to bring about the improvements in the Nursing departments of these Institutions which are thus shown to be defective. In this much-needed crusade, it affords us much pleasure to comply with the request made by various influential readers, and to place our columns and our assistance unreservedly at the disposal of those who are desirous to carry out improvements in the Poor Law Infirmaries of the United Kingdom.

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