

Discord v. Discipline.

It is proverbial that "birds in their nests" are not invariably in a condition of harmony and peace one with another; nor are the governing bodies of Workhouse Infirmaries, or of Hospitals.

At the Poplar and Stepney Sick Asylum there has long been trouble and disorganisation, and popular feeling points to two clerical members of the Board—who surely should bring peace and good-will to its deliberations—as being largely responsible.

At the last meeting, the Matron brought forward the names of two young women whom she recommended as probationers. Immediately the Rev. M. Hare and Father Higley, who on these occasions always form a clerical co-operation, objected on the grounds that "such appointments should be thrown open to the public," and that "one official should not appoint another." At this stage discussion became heated. The Medical Officer stated that Mr. Hare's policy in regard to the Nursing department was ruining all discipline. The Chairman complained of the mischief that was being done by such continued interference. Fortunately the Board had the good sense to realise that the Matron is the proper person to select Probationers, their *appointment*, of course, being subject to the Board. We wonder what Mr. Hare would say were he to have the appointments of his curates taken out of his hands? And it seems the Matron has never sought to appoint, only to recommend probationers. Father Higley surely ought to understand discipline, for the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church is military in its sternness. Anyway, we must suggest that the conduct of these two clerical gentlemen, in placing perpetual stumbling-blocks in the way of progress, is not creditable to the cloth they wear.

The Nursing of Sick Imbeciles.

WE quote the following article from last week's *British Medical Journal*, as it expresses the opinions formed, we feel sure, by all trained Nurses on this question:—

"The Asylums Board have done the right thing in regard to the Nursing at the Infirmaries attached to their Imbecile Asylums, although they have refused for the present to carry to its logical conclusion the reform which they have thus instituted. What they have done is to resolve that 'it be an instruction to the Committees of Management of the Imbecile Asylums to appoint a trained Hospital Nurse, with the title of Assistant Matron, who shall

control and superintend the Nursing of both male and female Infirmaries, and do the skilled Nursing herself when required.' What they have refused to do is to give preference to those who have had a Hospital training in all future appointments of Attendants in the Infirmaries. This, however, will come in the end, and will come all the more easily from the fact that, by introducing the Nursing element into the Matron's department, its ultimate spread throughout the attendant class is much facilitated.

One of the great difficulties which exist in regard to the introduction of trained Nursing into Workhouse Infirmaries lies in the fact that, except in the case of the 'separate' Infirmaries, the Nurse remains in all things subject to the Matron, an untrained person, who, in most cases, has but small sympathy with Nursing as it is now done. The better class of trained Nurses do not like to Nurse under an untrained head, and the difficulties which have at times arisen between various Boards of Guardians and the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association have frequently had their origin in the interference of an untrained Matron with trained Nurse's work. In Asylums this difficulty is accentuated by the fact that the Nurse would have to be subject to the head attendant.

By making a Hospital training a necessary qualification for the post of Assistant Matron, however, a large step is taken towards a realisation of the ideal according to which all Attendants in the Infirmaries should themselves be 'Hospital trained'; and although the Asylums Board have not seen their way to it at present, we hope that in those Asylums where any considerable number of bedridden imbeciles are gathered together this plan will ultimately be adopted.

We have long advocated the provision of skilled nursing for the sick in Workhouses, and we have done much to open the eyes of the public to the abuses which exist where these unfortunate people are left in the hands of the untrained. The general public have appreciated our efforts in this direction, and, under the wave of public opinion so created, many useful reforms have been carried out. There is a corner, however, of the Workhouse world of which outsiders know less, perhaps, than they do of any other—a corner the inhabitants of which are idiots, imbeciles, and chronically insane, and thus are afflicted not only with the ordinary difficulties which all paupers suffer from of making their complaints heard, but with the additional one of being mentally incapable of even making a complaint at all; and within this, again, there is a still further corner, the inhabitants of which are not only imbeciles and idiots, but are sick and often bedridden. It is

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