

Nursing Politics.

NURSING METHODS AT THE "METROPOLITAN."

WHAT has been strongly and naturally objected to as "Nursing Autocracy" is a system to which we have always strongly objected ever since we filled the post of a ward sister. We much regret, therefore, to hear that an attempt is being made to introduce the same system into the Metropolitan Hospital. It will be remembered that Miss Kingsford, the matron of the Metropolitan Hospital, is at present away on sick leave, and her place is temporarily filled by a *locum tenens* from another London hospital. We are informed that this lady had a comparatively short training in the wards, and afterwards acted as one of the Office Sisters, for some years, in the same institution. Apparently she is attempting to introduce into the Metropolitan Hospital the autocratic measures which have recently, owing to popular feeling, been to a great extent discontinued, but which, in the past, made the nursing management of one institution a bye-word in the Hospital world. One instance of this may be given. The sisters' times off duty at the Metropolitan Hospital were formerly arranged at hours when the medical staff did not visit the hospital, but it is asserted that the Acting Matron, without consulting the sisters on this point, asked the Committee to sanction her making alterations in these times off duty.

We imagine that it will occasion surprise to most people to hear the arrangements which were considered suitable by this lady. It was decided, upon her suggestion, that the ward sisters should have one half-day off duty a week, and three mornings a week from 10 to 12, and three evenings a week from 6 to 8. We are acquainted with hospitals where the probationers are off duty in the morning, but we know of none where the ward sisters are off duty three times a week when the medical staff are making their rounds. We cannot think that either the resident or the visiting staff will appreciate this arrangement, more especially as in this hospital it not unfrequently happens that the visiting staff attend in the mornings, and operations are by no means uncommonly performed early in the day. To arrange that the ward sisters should be off duty at this time, therefore, seems exceptionally infelicitous. A lay committee will rightly consult with the matron, and make no alterations in her department without her co-operation; but we are of opinion that the lady in question acted most unwisely in making alterations in this particular without consulting the ward sisters as to what times were the most convenient for them to leave their wards; and secondly, that no matron who regarded the convenience of the staff would think

of suggesting that ward sisters should be absent from their duties at the times mentioned.

It is widely stated that the commissariat department of this hospital, both with regard to the nurses' and the patients' food, is in a very unsatisfactory condition. It is asserted that one sister at least has complained to the matron on more than one occasion as to the quality of the food supplied both to the nursing staff and also to the patients, and that when she took a sample of the beef tea which was provided for her patients to the matron, this lady, instead of inquiring into the matter, told the sister that she seemed to think she knew more about the commissariat department than anyone else in the hospital, and suggested that perhaps she would like to make the beef tea herself, to which the sister replied that she would much prefer to do so, than have the patients improperly fed. We contend that this is not the manner in which a complaint as to the food supplied for the patients, made by a ward sister responsible to the medical staff for their being properly fed, should be received by the matron.

It will be seen from these instances that the relations of her subordinates to the Acting Matron must be somewhat strained, and we are not surprised that a valuable ward sister has been goaded into giving in her resignation to the Committee. Constant interference on the part of a matron makes the position of a self-respecting ward sister an intolerable one, and we understand that when this sister was reported by the matron to the Committee for trifling and unintentional omissions of duty, without ever having been informed by this lady that it was her intention to take these matters to the Committee, that the sister felt that the present complaints only formed a pretext for getting rid of her, and gave in her resignation. It is, we believe, almost unprecedented that a matron should take the serious step of reporting a ward sister to a committee without first acquainting the sister of her intention, and of her reasons for doing so.

It is a significant fact that this sister's post has immediately been filled by a member of the Nursing Staff of the Hospital with which the Acting Matron is connected, and we understand that before she left the Hospital, the sister drew the attention of the Chairman to the fact that she considered the position of the other sisters precarious and uncertain, and pointed out that though she herself had a home, some, less fortunately situated, might be thrown on the world.

The sister in question has acted as ward sister at the Metropolitan Hospital for some years, and by her devotion to her work and to the interests of the Hospital, has gained the confidence, and respect, both of the medical and nursing staff. We understand that great regret has been expressed upon all sides at her decision, and that

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