

should be so gravely ignorant as not to have been aware that opium is a powerful poison, and that half-an-ounce is a poisonous dose. Her own evidence, therefore, condemns her as ignorant, even if her misreading of the half-drachm symbol was due to mere carelessness. It is not too much to say that any properly trained nurse would have been aware that to administer half-an-ounce of opium in an enema was most unusual and very dangerous, and that therefore such a dose should not be given without special directions to that effect from the medical officer or the matron.

In the next place, it is a surprising fact that the matron should not have exercised the customary oversight in such a case. According to the report of her evidence it appears that "although it was her duty to personally superintend the administration of all poisons, she allowed the nurse to give the deceased the opium." Still more remarkable is the statement that Nurse Rice made a report that "she had given the patient three drachms of opium, but the matron did not at the time notice the quantity." To professional readers, these two statements taken together will require no comment; and we prefer to refrain from criticism. We must, however, add our hope that this occurrence may be the means of enforcing a more careful oversight of nurses in the administration of poisonous drugs in future, not only in this particular institution but also in all hospitals.

The broad features of the case are most important to the public, because they illustrate the danger to the sick which an ignorant or careless nurse can produce, and the cardinal necessity for a complete and systematic education of nurses in all branches of their calling. Not so very long ago, we were amused to observe in a medical paper a declamatory letter from a gentleman, who, we believe, is in general practice somewhere in Lancashire, and in which he ridiculed the idea of nurses being taught physiology, or, indeed, anything else beyond the details of making beds and making poultices. This inquest, at any rate, throws a lurid light on one consequence of the restricted education of nurses which he considered advisable. We, with wider knowledge, know that such ignorance is the cause of many accidents, and of serious dangers to the sick; dangers which, fortunately, in many cases are averted by prompt measures, but which, in other cases, such as the one in question, have caused a lamentable loss of life.

## Annotations.

### AN IMPOSSIBLE DEMAND.

A DUBLIN contemporary has approached Lord Roberts with the view of bringing to his notice the fact that no Roman Catholic Sisters are employed in the Royal Military Hospital, Phoenix Park, and has received the reply that "in the first selection of candidates for the Nursing Service, and in their subsequent employment, no reference whatsoever is made to their religious persuasion. Their duties are confined entirely to nursing, and they are transferred from one place to another at home and abroad, according to the requirements of the service, and irrespective of whether Protestant or Catholic soldiers may be treated in the hospitals to which they may be attached. In no other way could the work of the Nursing Service be satisfactorily carried on." Lord Roberts, therefore, sees no reason for making any special representation to head quarters upon the question. It is quite impossible that any other answer could have been given to our contemporary. It is essential that the Army Sisters should be selected on the grounds of their personal and professional qualifications alone. If religious questions are to be considered also, and Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics are to be provided with nurses of their own persuasion--and if the claims of the Roman Catholic patients in this respect were considered valid, those of other sects, religious and irreligious, certainly stand on the same footing--the work of the War Office in making appointments would be Herculean. We assume that the Roman Catholic patients in the Dublin Royal Military Infirmary are supplied with the services of a priest of their own persuasion, and if so, they can have no legitimate ground of complaint, unless indeed the Sisters have endeavoured to persuade them to leave their own faith for another, and this is not asserted, and would not, we are sure, for a moment be tolerated.

The duty of a Nursing Sister is to see that her patients are efficiently nursed, and to facilitate their obtaining any religious ministrations which they may desire, and there her duty begins and ends. The War Office certainly cannot be accused of selecting Sisters with a view to their acting as proselytisers for any particular branch of the church. If, therefore, the Sisters at the Military Hospital, Dublin, are "Protestants," by which, we assume, it is meant that they are members of the English Branch of the Church, the reason

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