

ledge of the signatories, the administration of the hospital was 'very unsatisfactory,' and that its reputation was 'in danger of being seriously compromised.' Descending to particulars, it went on to say that the diet was often deficient in quantity and quality, that the patients were often not kept clean as regards their bodies, and were not supplied with sufficient clean linen, that the treatment ordered by the medical staff was not efficiently carried out—indeed, that it was often omitted—that the natural wants of the paralysed were not properly attended to, and that this serious and discreditable state of affairs was due, in the opinion of the writers, to undermanning of the nursing staff and to very inadequate provision of linen by the management of the hospital, the latter deficiency being gravely accentuated by negligent washing of the draw-sheets, and by the refusal of the management to provide for the washing of sufficient bed-linen. It was further stated that the number of the nursing staff was insufficient even when all its members were available for duty, so that the patients were not properly attended; and, moreover, that there was no reserve of nurses, nor provision of substitutes for those absent through illness. The accommodation for nurses was said to be inadequate both for comfort and for health, and the food supplied to them to be exceedingly defective in quality."

The position, therefore, is that the Board of Management believe that any faults which may exist are "infinitesimal," while the staff hold that the administration is "very unsatisfactory." Sir Henry Burdett, who was present at the meeting, stated that he had paid the institution a most careful visit, and "there could be no question that its administration was excellent." We doubt, however, if this expression of opinion will satisfy either the medical staff or the general public. As the *Times* puts it:—"The conclusions announced by Sir Henry Burdett as the results of a visit which he paid to the hospital with Mr. Sydney Holland are, of course, entirely irrelevant to the questions at issue. The medical staff assert that the treatment ordered for the patients has not been efficiently carried out, indeed that it has been often omitted; and, in the face of this most weighty pronouncement, the casual visits of amateur inspectors may with propriety be disregarded."

It appears to us that the situation calls for an independent enquiry, and as the points complained of affect mainly the efficiency of the nursing staff, the Committee of Investigation should include a trained nurse experienced in nursing organization, and in the administration of the domestic department of a hospital.

## Nursing Echoes.

\* \* \* *All communications must be duly authenticated with name and address, not for publication, but as evidence of good faith, and should be addressed to the Editor, 20, Upper Wimpole Street, W.*



THE *Lancet*, in its last issue, devotes a column of space to the discussion of the paper on "A Poor Law Nursing Service," read by Miss E. Julian, Matron of the Croydon Infirmary, at the recent Conference of the Matrons' Council. Miss Julian, who, says our contemporary, is in a position to know her subject intimately, devoted the main part of her paper to the very anomalous position of Superintendent Nurses or Matrons. It then quotes at length from the paper in which it will be remembered that the writer stated that "the rules framed for the guidance of the Superintendent of Nurses in the Poor Law Training Schools of to-day are the same as those laid down for Workhouse Matrons by the Local Government Board in the Consolidated Orders of 1847, and are practically those of a working housekeeper," and concludes its quotation with the following sentence:—

"It follows that the Matron of a Poor Law Infirmary as Superintendent of Nurses, has no legal status whatever; her position is in no sense assured, but dependent on her surroundings. Every atom of power, any semblance of authority, the matron may possess has been accorded her as an act of grace; she can claim nothing as her bounden right."

THE *Lancet* thinks that the latter portion of Miss Julian's remarks is worded too strongly, and continues:—"All positions in life are what we make them, but we think that, in the small workhouse infirmary, the care of the sick and the provision for nursing should be vested in the general practitioner who is medical officer to the workhouse, but in the large parish infirmary, *responsibility with regard to the nursing staff, except as regards purely medical duties, should be, as is the case in any general hospital, vested in the Matron or Superintendent Nurse.*" In country workhouses the position of the Superintendent Nurses should be made more independent of the Master and Matron, and more dependent on the medical officer."

WE cannot agree with our contemporary that Miss Julian's remarks are too strong. She

\* The italics are ours.

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