

The Departmental Committee on Workhouse Nursing.

The Report of the Departmental Committee appointed by the President of the Local Government Board to inquire into the Nursing of the Sick Poor in Workhouses recommends that there shall be four well-defined grades in the Poor Law Nursing Service, viz. :—

1. PROBATIONERS, trained either in Major or Minor Training Schools, with qualifications: (a) minimum age, 21; (b) intelligence; (c) good character and health.

2. QUALIFIED NURSES.—Qualification, one year's training in, and the formal certificate of, a Minor Training School, or alternatively an equivalent certificate from a non-Poor Law institution.

3. TRAINED NURSES.—Qualification, three years' training in, and the formal certificate of, a Major Training School, or alternatively an equivalent certificate from a non-Poor Law institution.

4. SUPERINTENDENT NURSES.—Qualifications :—
(a) Certificate as Trained Nurse.
(b) One year's service as Trained Nurse or as a non-Poor Law nurse of equivalent rank.
(c) Midwifery qualification recognised by the Board of Midwives.

It will be noted that two important principles are thus incorporated with regard to Superintendent Nurses :

(1) That a certificated nurse requires further experience before she is qualified to discharge the duties of a position in which administrative ability is required of her.

(2) That while an obstetric qualification may not be necessary for all nurses, it should be obligatory in those who hold positions of superintendents of others. This attitude might well be adopted by those who appoint to the higher posts throughout the nursing world.

We regret that the Committee should have recommended the appointment of a minor order under the title of "Qualified Nurses." We hope this grade may be dropped out of the scheme eventually adopted.

PROBATIONERS.

In regard to Probationers, it is further suggested that they shall be required to pass through a preliminary trial period of six weeks or two months to the satisfaction of the Guardians.

An increase in the supply should be encouraged—

(1) By increasing the facilities for training.
(2) By increasing the opportunities for occupation and promotion in the Poor Law Service when the training is complete; to which end

(a) Appointments of untrained persons

as "Assistant Nurses" should no longer be sanctioned;

(b) The appointment of Matrons of Workhouses who have received training as nurses should be encouraged;

(c) All Probationers should be enabled to qualify, if they desire, as Trained Nurses and Superintendent Nurses.

(3) By increasing the attractiveness of Poor Law Nursing.

MASTER OF WORKHOUSE.

The Committee recommend that the Master of the Workhouse, while retaining his position and general responsibility as Officer-in-Charge, should be relieved of the following duties wherever a qualified Superintendent Nurse is appointed :—

(1) The reception, care, and control of the sick and convalescents in the sick wards.

(2) The control of the nurses.

(3) The control of the paid and pauper servants in the sick wards.

(4) The visiting of the sick wards.

(5) The cleanliness of the sick wards and the furniture and fittings in them.

(6) The care and distribution of clothes, bedding, and of all stores in the sick wards.

(7) The reception, service, and distribution of food in the sick wards.

MATRON OF THE WORKHOUSE.

The Matron, if properly trained, should be allowed to act as—

(1) Trained Nurse in a workhouse with not more than sixty beds.

(2) Superintendent Nurse in a workhouse with not more than 100 sick-beds. In each case she should be assisted by a proper staff of nurses, and by an Assistant Matron when necessary.

(3) The Matron should be relieved of the duties enumerated above in relation to the Master, wherever a duly qualified Superintendent Nurse is appointed.

GUARDIANS.

In relation to the Guardians it is recommended that they—

I. Should be given power to appoint individual probationers without the Board's sanction.

II. Should be urged to adopt certain principles and recommendations made by the Committee, including the employment, when possible, of paid servants in the nurses' quarters; the employment of nurses to nurse the outdoor in combination with the indoor poor (surely a regrettable recommendation, in so far as it applies to probationers still in training); to increase the comfort and salaries of the nurses; and in each case to provide an adequate staff of nurses in workhouses and infirmaries.

III. Should be given power to prescribe appropriate duties for a Superintendent Nurse.

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