

matters should be under its control; that the Secretary should be a fully-trained nurse; and that a trained and experienced nurse should be placed in charge of the department. Mrs. Wates also assumed a logical position in regard to the vexed question of the relations of the Matron and the Superintendent Nurse. She did not advocate the establishment of a dual control by making the Superintendent Nurse independent of the Matron, but rather that women should be appointed Matrons of Workhouses who are trained nurses, and who would consequently be competent to supervise the work of the nurses in the sick wards. This has always appeared to us to be the right solution of the difficulty. At present the workhouse matron is often appointed solely because she is the wife of the Master. She should obviously be appointed for her qualifications for the office which she has to fill. In this connection it is interesting to note that evidence was given by quite a number of workhouse matrons who are trained nurses.

Miss Wilson, Treasurer of the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association, made an important suggestion that before infirmaries of 250 beds and over are recognised as training schools and scheduled thus, an official inspection should be made of them, and that the commission appointed for this purpose should include a woman who has had experience in Poor Law Nursing and has held the position of Matron.

We are glad to note that Miss Wilson repudiates, as we have always done, that nurses refuse workhouse appointments on account of the uninteresting nature of the cases. She says, "Of course there are a large number of chronic cases, but if a nurse has been well trained she has learnt that such cases require quite as high a standard of nursing as the more acute cases." Miss Gibson, of Birmingham, in speaking of the responsibility of the nurse in a country workhouse where there is no resident medical officer, emphasised the same point. "She has a very large number of patients, many of whom certainly are chronic and infirm cases, but my experience has led me to the conclusion that chronic and infirm cases require both constant and thorough nursing, and constant supervision to keep them in the state in which they ought to be kept."

Miss Marquardt, Matron of the Camberwell Infirmary, gave evidence as to the difficulties she had experienced as a Superintendent Nurse.

Another point brought out was the difficulty in obtaining satisfactory assistant nurses, and the abolition of this class was advocated by several witnesses. One witness asserted that when she advertised for assistant nurses the applicants were the failures of the infectious hospitals.

From the educational standpoint—that is to say, in

regard to what should constitute a minimum curriculum of nursing education—singularly little evidence seems to have been given by trained nurses. Mrs. Hull, a trained nurse and Matron of the Stockport Workhouse, said she emphatically thought that there should be a universal syllabus. Miss Gibson, of Birmingham, also thought that the Local Government Board should issue a curriculum of training which it would recognise as qualifying for appointments under the Board. What is needed, however, is a minimum standard of nursing education and subsequent examination, not only in the Poor Law Service, but also for all nurses qualifying for registration by the State. Miss Gibson considered not only that there was no uniform standard of training in the nursing world, but that no efforts had been made to obtain it. In this connection it may be pointed out that the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland has for one of its objects the establishment of "a uniform system of examination, certification, and State registration for nurses in British hospitals."

Miss Gibson approved of the educational test which would be imposed by the establishment of an independent board of examination and certification by the Local Government Board, assuming the formation of a nursing department having special knowledge of these matters. She admitted that it would be a new departure to constitute the Poor Law an educational authority, but saw no reason why this should not be done. It would benefit the Poor Law, as a Government certificate would tend to keep nurses in the Service. A point of great interest is that the members of the Departmental Committee evidently realised that the training of probationers is primarily an educational question, and suggested various educational authorities as the examining bodies—such, for instance, as the Birmingham University. The educational aspect of the nursing question has been somewhat obscured in the past by the practical nature of a nurse's work, and the fact that she is paid a salary while receiving a professional education. But it is becoming more and more evident in our training-schools that the Sisters of wards should be appointed not only for their skill as nurses but also for their ability as teachers of nursing, for the efficient teaching of probationers is one of the most important duties required of them, and if they fall short in this respect the training-school suffers in a lowered standard. Again, in the United States it is now urged that nurse training-schools should, in common with other educational agencies, be placed under the Board of Education, and the instruction given in them be thus regulated by an educational authority. It is interesting to note that the Departmental Committee of the Local Government Board recognised this educational standpoint.

The Hon. Sydney Holland, Chairman of the

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)