

which it is its first duty to uphold, itself, and to cause others to obey. Nay, more: it cannot, in the face of the same evidence, be denied that the Committee has absolutely empowered one of its officials to break the Bye-Laws, and to treat the Standing Orders relating to her office with equal contempt. This strikes at the root of the whole of these scandals. So it will be well that we should give chapter and verse for our grave indictment.

Bye-Law 3, Section XI., states that the House Governor "shall (subject to the House Committee) have the entire control of the Hospital, and of all the resident officers and servants, except the Chaplain and the Secretary when in residence." But before the Lords Committee, Mr. Nixon, the House Governor, was asked by Lord Sandhurst the following questions, and gave the following answers:—"Is the Matron independent of you, or is she responsible to you?—By the law she is responsible to me, but in practice it has come to be that she is entirely independent." "In everything, not only in the Nursing home?—In the Nursing home and all arrangements with her Nurses." "Who is the Matron responsible to, then?—The Matron is responsible to the House Committee; technically by the law she is responsible to me in the absence of the House Committee, but that has lapsed."

We turn now to the Standing Orders of the Matron. Section XXXVII. and No. 1 reads thus: "In the absence of the House Committee she shall be under the control of the House Governor." Further comment is needless. No. 6 is as follows: "In event of serious misconduct on the part of any Sister, Nurse, or Probationer, she shall bring the facts to the notice of the House Governor, and if deemed necessary she shall (with his concurrence) suspend the person in question till the next meeting of the House Committee, to whom she shall report in writing the circumstances leading to such suspension, unless it be previously cancelled." Lord Sandhurst asked Mr. Nixon: "In regard to the case of the dismissal of a Nurse, would the Matron consult you?" The House Governor's reply is noteworthy: "I have never known her to do so in such a case." "She would merely report it?" asked the Chairman. "It would go direct to the Committee," replied Mr. Nixon.

The point might with great advantage have been further elucidated, because the House Governor's reply seems to infer that he knew of Nurses dismissed by the Matron without reference to himself, and it would have been highly interesting to know whether there have been many cases like the one which we narrated some few weeks ago, in which a Probationer was dismissed for incompetency by the Matron, and

then, when friends took up the case, was reinstated, and finally received the Hospital certificate of efficiency. The farce being played without reference to the House Governor, or report to the House Committee.

Then we come to No. 9, which reads thus: "She shall frequently visit the Wards and see that they are in proper order for the reception of cases, and she shall carefully note whether the regulations as to the treatment and dieting of patients, as to the cleanliness of the beds, and of the Wards in general, and with regard to the washing and keeping of the patients clean, as far as circumstances will allow, are duly carried out by those members of the Nursing Staff, who in their several positions are in such matters responsible to her." There can be no dispute that herein are embodied the first duties of a Matron's office—the close personal supervision of the work of her subordinates. We are not aware of another Hospital where it would be permitted that the Matron should not perform her primary duty. At most Institutions, of course, a daily, or even a twice daily, visit is enjoined and carried out.

Yet how accurately the Matron is acquainted with the letter of her rules, and how completely she carries out their spirit, is well exemplified in the following questions of Lord Sandhurst and her replies:—"Is it your duty to go round the Wards?—To see the things are right in the Wards, and go round as occasion may require. I used to go round a great deal when the Wards needed putting in order. Of course I go now when there is anything needed, and full rounds when I have time; but it is my duty to visit them at no fixed hours; at 'convenient seasons,' I think the standing order runs." "Is it not your duty to go round the Wards every day?—It would be impossible to do it every day. I go round very often at night, very often in the day, and more often at night." "These visits of yours to the Wards are now very occasional, I understand?—I might go two or three times in a week, or it might be two or three weeks before I got round to them."

We presume we have quoted sufficient to show the manner in which the Matron treats her rules with the sanction of the Committee. If our first critic will turn to the evidence of the Secretary to the Hospital, and that of Mr. Carr-Gomm, he will find that the Committee has practically delegated all authority over the Nurses to the Matron.

Our answer to the second objection, which we quoted above, is very simple. We do recognise that discipline must be maintained, and that authority must be given to those who rule. But we deny totally and absolutely that it is

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)