

# Nursing <sup>THE</sup> Record.

"QUI NON PROFICIT, DEFICIT."

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## EDITORIAL.

### NURSING DESPOTISM.

IN our remarks last week we used the term "nursing despotism," and used it advisedly. Because we have the high authority of the *British Medical Journal* for the employment of the phrase under exactly similar circumstances. It will be interesting and probably new to many of our readers to learn the reason why our contemporary introduced these words into a remarkable article on Nurses and Doctors which appeared in its columns so long ago as January 17, 1880 (p. 90). "There tends," wrote our contemporary, "very easily, and in some places quite fatally, to grow up an empire within an empire; and as the Lady Superintendent is often personally intimate or influential with the lay members of the governing board, on which the Medical Staff are frequently not represented, and as the administration of any institution once entrusted to a Nursing sisterhood is largely dependent upon that sisterhood or other organization for its smooth working, the power which the Lady Superintendent acquires becomes very considerable, and is not always used with sufficient discretion or reasonableness.

"The Guy's Hospital incident is one example. What we hear from Leicester shows that even

where, in the opinion of some, this system of nursing despotism succeeds, it is far from being an unmixed benefit. We have to-day another story from Manchester, which illustrates again the necessity for some sort of reconsideration of the methods and principles under which nursing is to be conducted in Hospitals unless we are to see the Nurses, who are essentially the instruments of the Doctor, become his mistresses.

"As we have it on good authority, the recent incident at the Children's Hospital, Manchester, is painfully instructive in this respect. Dr. Humphreys, a Cambridge graduate of high distinction, Fourth Wrangler, Fellow of St. John's, &c., who from his medical career had a fair chance of getting on the staff of one of the Hospitals with which he had been connected in London, was induced to join the Children's Hospital, at Pendlebury, as Assistant Physician. To this post a salary of about £300 a year was attached. After some time the Directing Physician resigned, and Dr. Humphreys was appointed Physician, with a salary of £400 a year, a colleague being appointed at the same time, also paid. The payment is necessary, since the Hospital is situated far from the town (five or six miles), and general practice is forbidden. After holding the offices of Physician and Assistant Physician for three years, during which time he had every reason to believe that his position was a permanent one, Dr. Humphreys has been suddenly suspended from his duties, and has in consequence felt it incumbent on him to resign his office. The only cause given for the suspension is that he had been guilty of a breach of discipline in interfering in an improper manner with the control of Nurses by the Lady Superintendent. The Committee refuse to give any further reason. The profession generally in Manchester feel very strongly that Dr. Humphreys has been treated in a very unjust manner, and that to dismiss a Physician of his standing because the head of the Nursing department complained of his interfering with her in her duties, is to pass a slight on the profession.

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