

before they are appointed, and be present at every Committee when business connected with the female staff is under discussion. She should issue all passes for leave of absence, and report all cases of negligence and misconduct to the Medical Officer.

In cases of emergency, arising in the absence of the Medical Officer, the Superintendent Nurse should requisition the Master for the necessary help, she reporting the same to the Medical Officer.

At the same time it is felt that difficulties would arise in applying this procedure to the small country Unions. We therefore suggest that in cases where only three to four nurses are employed that the name Superintendent Nurse should be changed to that of Charge Nurse, and that she should work according to the old Orders.

It is an undisputed fact that the present anomalous position of the Superintendent Nurse, in a large number of cases, prevents the best and most suitable women from applying for these important and responsible posts.

We therefore beg that any alterations made in existing conditions may be such as will render these posts universally attractive to self-respecting and well-trained women.

ELEANOR C. BARTON,

President P.L.I.M. Association.

Miss Barton added: I should like, as a personal expression of opinion, to put forward the suggestion that perhaps the difficulty might be met in institutions of from 60 to 100 beds if only women were appointed as Workhouse Matrons to these smaller institutions who held a three years' certificate from a recognized Training School, and the certificate of the Central Midwives Board, the Matron could have trained assistance according to the needs of the Institution, and the necessity for Superintendent Nurses in these smaller Institutions would then practically cease to exist.

Miss Wilson said that her Association had sent a memorial to Mr. John Burns, and also offered a deputation, and pressed till they received an answer, but "no more expert knowledge was wanted," and they were refused.

RESOLUTIONS.

Miss C. J. Wood, who moved the first resolution, said that she had been a sort of Meddlesome Matty in Poor Law affairs for many years. She had come to the conclusion that the only remedy was to sweep away the Local Government Board Office, owing to the hopelessness of knocking any sense into the present Board. She moved:—

"That this meeting is of opinion that all nurses who are employed in the sick wards of workhouses or rural workhouse infirmaries should be trained in the accepted sense of the word, and that the sick department be a separate department under the control of the Infirmary Committee or the Guardians."

This was seconded by Miss Amy Hughes and carried.

The second Resolution was moved by Miss Gibson, as follows:—

"That this meeting of Guardians, Poor Law and Infirmary Matrons, and others, would respectfully ask the Local Government Board if they may be supplied with a copy of the Draft Order, in order that they may consider the same before it becomes law."

This Resolution was also carried.

The meeting was then adjourned, so that the situation might be considered when the Order was before it.

THE CENTRAL POOR-LAW CONFERENCE.

The forty-first annual Central Poor-Law Conference was held in the Council Chamber of the Guildhall, London, on Tuesday and Wednesday, February 11th and 12th.

The proceedings on Tuesday were opened by the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor.

The President, Mr. Morton Latham, D.L., J.P., in proposing a vote of thanks to the Lord Mayor, said they had met together in the wealthiest city in Europe to consider extreme poverty. Development must necessarily follow changing customs. Good or bad administration depended entirely on the men and women who administered, and it was desirable that only those should be elected as guardians who had a special interest in the poor, and, we should like to add, some expert knowledge of social conditions beyond the village pump!

The papers read on Tuesday were, (1) "The Mental Deficiency Bill from a Eugenic Aspect," by Major Leonard Darwin, President of the Eugenics Education Society, and by Miss Fortey, B.Sc., P.L.G., Leicester, (2) "The Administrative Side of the Bill," by Rev. P. S. G. Probert, a guardian of the Fulham Union.

Major Darwin pointed out that, as regards the mentally deficient, our legal and social system seemed to be designed actually to encourage their appearance; for, whereas the parents of a normal child had to feed him, find boots for his journeys to school, etc., the deficient child is carried there, fed there, and often given boots. It follows that this lessening of strain on the parents of defectives must have some tendency to promote their fertility. The eugenicist sees that the main object must be to increase productiveness in the higher types, by the State making adequate provision for all mothers and all children who stand in need of it. Where more than one defective child has appeared no relief, charitable or otherwise, should be given to such parents, outside the workhouse, so long as capable of bearing children. Institutional experience proves that, while a large number of mental defectives remain remarkably contented under permanent control, freedom often means nothing but misery and disgrace. Our main eugenic hope rests on dealing with the defective child from infancy onwards, in such a way as to prevent procreation when grown up.

Miss Fortey said: "Only very extraordinary circumstances justify the setting aside of the fundamental right of mankind. One of these rights is that of marriage, including that of parenthood. If it were *certain* that offspring would be degenerate, it would be a strong case for prohibition." She went on to quote from various authorities who question the possibility of anyone predicting the quality of an infant to be born; one giving an instance of two feeble-minded parents producing children of normal intelligence. She urged the point that an examination in scholarship would not be a test for parenthood, and said

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