

At a special meeting of the Council of Poor Law Unions held in the Connaught Rooms on Thursday, October 16th, Alderman F. J. Beavan, J.P., of Cardiff, presiding, the draft Poor Law Institutions Nursing Order was considered.

A discussion ensued as to precedence of officials in the workhouse infirmary. Miss Brodie Hall expressed the opinion that the matron should not have precedence over the superintendent nurse. At present there was a considerable amount of friction.

Mr. Lawrence said the intention was that the superintendent nurse should be the first in authority in the sick wards.

Mr. Leach (Rochdale) said his experience was opposed to the opinion given by Miss Brodie Hall that the matrons were illiterate as compared with superintendent nurses.

It was decided to recommend that the precedence should be as follows:—1, medical officer; 2, master, or, in his absence, the matron; 3, superintendent nurse responsible to the medical officer for the welfare and nursing of the sick, and to the master for the government and conduct of the nurses and control of the servants when in the sick wards; 4, the matron, responsible to the master for the cooking of the food for the sick and the nurses, and for the laundry (except where there was a separate laundry for the sick wards), with the right to visit the sick wards unless otherwise ordered by the Guardians.

The question of the relation of the Superintendent Nurse to the Master and Matron is always a difficult and delicate one. If the Matron is responsible for the food for the sick, and for the laundry for the sick wards, the Superintendent Nurse may be much hampered in her work. Indeed, this matter of clean linen is one which is a fruitful source of vexation. The question is not primarily the relative culture of Matron and Superintendent Nurse, but of the work of a trained woman being controlled by one who is untrained in nursing. The solution seems largely to lie in the division of the offices of Master and Matron, and the appointment of a Matron who is a trained nurse in workhouses where the sick wards are unseparated. At present the Matron is almost invariably the wife of the Master.

Penzance Board of Guardians, like many others, do not find it easy to obtain or retain trained nurses. There was recently only one applicant for the position of head nurse at the Workhouse, and she declined the post when

she had seen the House. The medical officer recommended the appointment of a temporary nurse between the departure of a nurse and the arrival of another. One guardian said they could do without a nurse for a fortnight. Another that it was not necessary to have a trained nurse. We are glad to note that the Master said "it was absolutely essential that they should have a trained nurse."

Another member said that ever since he had been on the Board there had been nothing but trouble about nurses. Surely there was something they could do to settle the question.

Ultimately the Chairman read an application from a nurse. One guardian proposed someone should go and see the lady; another that she be engaged "right off." A lady guardian said that many things might crop up; the nurse did not know they had no night attendant, and that she would have to be on night duty part of the time. A colleague accused this lady of giving the show away again.

Another lady said: We shall never keep a nurse until we have a night attendant.

In the end the applicant was engaged "straight away" without an interview, and the Master was empowered to engage a temporary nurse until the dark horse arrived.

In our opinion the Local Government Board should prohibit one nurse being compelled to be on duty day and night. It is grossly improper that any Government Department should be permitted to sanction any such arrangement.

Miss Grace Tindall, who has been in England for the last six months, is returning to India next week, there to begin her new work as Lady Superintendent of Dr. Masina's new Hospital at Bombay. It is intended that a training school for nurses shall be organized in connection with it, and three English Sisters are being engaged to superintend the wards and practical teaching, so as to fit the nurses for the Bombay Presidency Examination. The Hospital will contain 120 beds, and Dr. Masina, who has been busy visiting the best hospitals in England and on the Continent, intends to instal new up to date appliances, so that the treatment of the patients shall be on the most modern scientific lines.

Miss Tindall will arrive in Bombay in time to attend the Nursing Conference to be held in that city at the end of November, she will be able to give valuable information on nursing conditions and politics in England, which she does not consider have improved, as they would have done had State Registration been established a decade ago.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)