

Radium treatment was still in its experimental stage, and the medical profession were still endeavouring to fathom its effect on disease, to estimate its dosage, and to classify the cases suitable for treatment. He thought it would be well to keep silence on the subject for the next two years, until they could make some definite announcement. He deplored the fact that the hospital had so inadequate a supply of radium owing to its scarcity and enormous cost.

### THE POOR LAW INFIRMARY MATRONS' ASSOCIATION.

#### MATRON-IN-CHIEF AT THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD.

At the invitation of Miss Barton, a large number of the Poor Law Infirmary Matrons' Association met at an informal tea at Chelsea Infirmary on February 26th to meet Miss Stansfeld and Miss Haldane. Miss Stansfeld could only stay a short time. After tea Miss Haldane gave an address, in the course of which she said that she spoke with some diffidence, realizing that she, a lay woman outside the nursing world, was surrounded by experts, but that she had come to discuss the question of the Workhouse Nursing Association and the new Poor Law Nursing Order, and the possible improvements to be made. In the first instance, she said, it seemed to her extraordinary that a Committee should have been formed which contained not a single woman, when the subject under discussion was the nursing of infants and women, about which men could know little or nothing. A deputation of ladies had been to Mr. Burns, and explained at great length the difficulties of the situation, and a very few improvements had been made, but not at all what they had hoped for.

The work of the Association more nearly concerned the smaller workhouses in the country than the larger buildings. During the last few years very great progress had been made in every branch of the nursing world. She thought it was everybody's duty, more now than ever, to try to have certain reforms carried out. It seemed to her that the following were some of the important questions under discussion:—"Who should take charge of the linen?" This was really an acute question. "Were the Superintendent Nurse's reports to be submitted to the Board through the Master?" "Does the Master of the workhouse control the nurses?" "Are children being nursed in the adult wards?" Also how far paupers help in nursing the patients.

She considered there should be a trained nurse in every workhouse, and women to inspect the maternity wards.

Miss Haldane thought that in a modified degree the same principle should be carried out with regard to Poor Law nursing as in the Army and Territorial Nursing Services, with a Matron-in-Chief who should have her offices in Whitehall, with Principal Matrons, &c., under her in different districts, or some place like the Queen's Jubilee Institute for Nurses; by that means nurses working alone in smaller country workhouses would be able to take more interest in their work, feeling that they were under competent supervision, and would have a chance of promotion. She was very anxious to have the opinion of those present on this subject and enlist their help, and reminded them of the old platitude that "union is strength."

Miss Barton said that she desired to emphasize the fact that they did not wish in any way to work against the Local Government Board, which was always most sympathetic to their Association, but would gladly give any helpful suggestions they could. As Miss Stansfeld was not present, she could say how they one and all appreciated her unflinching help and courtesy and the steady support she had always given to their Association. Miss Barton thought that many members of the Association were much interested in the suggestion of a Nursing Board at Whitehall, and thought it might help to solve some of the difficulties connected with the shortage of nurses, especially in some of the country institutions.

Several of those present mentioned difficulties connected with the new Order, and suggestions were made. A unanimous expression of opinion in sympathy with Miss Haldane's suggestion was passed, and it was agreed to discuss the subject at the next quarterly meeting.

The proposal that the Poor Law Nursing Service should be centrally organized by a Matron-in-Chief at the Local Government Board Office was made for the first time in this JOURNAL over ten years ago, and we have consistently advocated this reform in these pages on many occasions. We believe in central organization, and that immense improvements in Poor Law Nursing would radiate from the office of a Matron-in-Chief. It is good news that the Poor Law Matrons' Association intend to seriously consider this question in the near future, and that they have the support and approval of Miss Haldane, whose personal interest in the nursing profession is so sincere.

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