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## EDITORIAL.

### THE MAINTENANCE OF DISCIPLINE.

In the management of any considerable body of persons the enforcement of reasonable discipline is essential to efficiency. This probably reaches its highest development in the Navy and Army, in which the subordination of the individual, to the general good is strikingly exemplified. There each man is responsible to the officer immediately over him, and any effort on his part to make representations, as to any real or fancied grievances, through any other channel, would be immediately checked by his superiors.

In hospitals and nursing institutions the same principle holds good. The various members of the nursing staff are under the control and supervision of the Head of the Nursing Department, *i.e.*, the Matron. If therefore they have any just grievance this should be reported to her, and then left to her to deal with. Only if the Matron refuses to listen to representations, or declines to take any action in regard to complaints, have her subordinates any right to approach the committee directly, and committees are well advised, if such a breach of discipline occurs, to intimate the proper procedure, and inform Sisters or nurses that representations must be made through the recognized official channel.

Practically, if reasonable representations are made to a Matron, concerning a just grievance, she is usually only too anxious that it should be remedied, and not only from the point of discipline, but also because their cause could have no stronger supporter, a nursing staff are well advised to acquaint the Matron with their views.

We are led to make these remarks because of an incident which recently occurred at the Victoria Hospital, Blackpool.

The point at issue was dissatisfaction with the food provided, and instead of

reporting the matter to the Matron, the Sisters appear to have discussed it with the medical staff, and enlisted their sympathy, the Matron, who was responsible—on the one hand for economical management, and, on the other, for providing nutritious, wholesome and palatable food—being unaware of any dissatisfaction on the part of the nursing staff.

The facts, as intimated by the Board of Management of the hospital to the press, for publication, are that the complaint was first mentioned by the Hon. Secretary of the Medical Board, and it appeared that the medical staff had been aware for some time past of the dissatisfaction but no complaint had ever been made by them to the Matron.

When the Committee deputed by the Board to consider the question interviewed the Matron, and made certain recommendations respecting the dietary, they found her in complete accord. At that interview it was made clear to the Committee that the Matron could no longer rely upon the loyalty of the two Sisters concerned, as she had never had the slightest intimation of any of the grievances reported. It was for this reason that the Committee considered it in the best interests of the internal management of the hospital that the Sisters should resign, and it was this decision which four members of the medical staff considered "too drastic and unfair," and on which they resigned as a protest.

All this trouble apparently arose from lack of discipline. Not only nurses, but, we fear Committees also, sometimes fail to support their chief officers. We have heard of both Hospital Committees, and Boards of Guardians inviting expressions of opinions from Sisters and nurses concerning their Matron, and one Committee considered it seemly to consult the cook as to the Matron's qualifications! Who could maintain discipline under such conditions?

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