

THE
BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,483

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1916

Vol LVII

EDITORIAL.

DO NURSES STAND TOO MUCH?

An animated discussion is proceeding in the *Daily Mail* under the heading "Nurses Stand too Much." Do they? What do our readers think?

Mrs. C. G. Dixon declares that the unnecessary standing — and long hours — prevent many quite healthy though not over strong women from becoming nurses in this time of exceptional need, and that except during the short meal times, and the two hours off duty, nurses are not allowed to sit down at all in the whole twelve or fourteen hours' day, even to make "swabs" and prepare dressings which could be done quite as quickly sitting as standing, and that on "doctor's afternoons" (every afternoon is doctor's afternoon in a busy London Hospital) the nurses in the wards he visits last may have to wait about for an hour or so doing absolutely nothing, yet they may not sit down—"They may not even get on with the work which is crying out to be done in case the doctor should appear at any moment. His nerves, one supposes, would not stand the shock of seeing a couple of probationers quietly making dressings at a side table in the ward."

This letter has provoked a reply from Lord Knutsford who signs himself "Chairman of three London Hospitals where no such rule exists." He challenges Mrs. Dixon to give the name of any hospital where such an "absurd and cruel rule" is in force, and says "as applied generally to all hospitals the statement is untrue." So the glove is down and it is "up to" those who assert that it does exist to prove it.

But this may not be as easy a matter as it appears. There are many unwritten rules which are quite as binding as those which are framed and glazed, or pinned on the nurses' green board.

A chairman may truthfully say such a rule

is non-existent. The probationer with equal truth may tell quite a different story. Not only every hospital, but to some extent every ward in the same hospital has its own unspoken rules, its own standard, dependent on the will, and in some degree the temperament of the Sister.

No doubt an appeal to authority might prove that a particular rule which presses hardly is not endorsed by the Committee, but that is seldom a step regarded as practicable by the probationer in training. "It is never done," "it is very bad form," is enough for the average probationer, into whose scheme of things the possibility of an adverse report, and being "sent for to Matron" to be told that nursing is not her vocation always enters.

The "Chairman of a Large Provincial Hospital" appears to appreciate the position when he writes to our contemporary.

"The real position I believe to be that, while there is no rule against nurses in hospitals sitting down, they do, in fact, refrain from doing so because they are afraid it will gain them a reputation with their matron for slackness.

"This, I know, is the case here, and from conversations I have had at different times with our sisters is the case at most hospitals. So far as this hospital is concerned there is no ground for this fear, but our staff is slow to believe it."

The hard fact must also be remembered that in a busy ward there is often no time for nurses to sit down, and the harassed Sister is often compelled to be more or less a slave driver in order that the day's work may be accomplished.

Lord Knutsford raises another question when he writes that if subscribers to hospitals would ask to see the sleeping accommodation thought fit for nurses they would, in many cases, think that nurses "stand too much."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)