

shortly after obtaining their medical qualification, and whose whole professional career has, therefore, been passed in the one narrow groove of Poor Law routine. Far be it from us to speak, in the slightest degree, disrespectfully or even lightly of these gentlemen's abilities or qualifications. It would only argue ignorance upon our part to do so, for it is a matter of common knowledge that some of the most advanced thinkers and most scientific workers of the day have passed the major part of their professional lives under the authority of the Local Government Board. The point to which we desire to draw attention, is that these gentlemen, however eminent, however useful to the State and to their special locality, are, as an almost invariable rule, cumbered with too much serving, and that they are fettered hand and foot with parochial red-tape. Under the existing rules of most of these Institutions, the medical officer is held responsible for a thousand and one details which are entirely outside his professional duties; he is practically matron, housekeeper, and steward, as well as doctor. The natural—indeed, the inevitable—consequence is that little or no time is left to him to teach the Nurses the clinical details of disease or injury, without which knowledge no woman can ever become a really efficient attendant upon the sick. And without this medical instruction, nine-tenths of Nursing work becomes meaningless, and, therefore, loses the absorbing interest which it should possess for the worker. Now, if this is the case in the great majority of the largest Metropolitan and Provincial Infirmaries, how much more so is it true in those many rural Workhouses where the Infirmary is represented by two or more dormitories set apart for the sick, where there is no resident medical officer at all, and where the duties of seeing bedridden paupers is performed by the parish doctor, who probably lives miles away, and whose visits to the Workhouse are brief and fleeting in accordance with the many other demands made upon his overtaxed time and thought. So far as these latter Institutions are concerned, we may clear the ground for future discussions

of the subject by expressing our conviction that while the present system is maintained, it is futile to expect that these rural Infirmaries can ever be made useful as Training Schools for Nurses, because the very essentials of such educational establishments are altogether absent and wanting. The improvements which could be made in these, so far as the Nursing is concerned, would be in the appointment of a thoroughly trained Nurse as the Matron of the Workhouse, with such numbers of thoroughly trained Nurses under her as would suffice for the care, both by day and by night, of the average number of paupers who are always in the Sick Wards. And we are not without hope that the manifest advantages of this plan will in due course lead to its universal adoption in rural districts to the benefit both of many well-trained women who are past more active work in their profession, and of the general tone and of the general comfort of the sick poor. Mr. BUMBLE is disappearing; there can be no valid reason why Mrs. BUMBLE should not follow him. We propose, therefore, to confine our consideration of the subject of Poor Law Infirmaries as Nurse-Training Schools solely to the cases of large Metropolitan and Provincial Institutions in which there are one or more resident medical officers. There is a considerable amount of dissatisfaction at present concerning the supine and negative attitude assumed by many Boards of Guardians on this question, and, as our columns this week show, an influential memorial has recently been presented to the Local Government Board, urging that official steps should be taken to bring about reforms. For the words or the wishes thus expressed we have nothing but sympathy; but we cannot but feel that it is more to individual efforts than to Government interference that we must look for the advances which are necessary and the improvements which are so much desired. It must be remembered that Workhouse Infirmary officials already possess, and indeed have, for many years, possessed, the power to form Training Schools for Nurses in connection with their

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