

Nursing Politics.

THE PRESS AND THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

THE *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* maintain a significant silence on the management of the Royal British Nurses' Association.

The *Medical Press and Circular* takes an un-biassed and sensible view of the question, and naturally regrets "that the Council is prevented from giving a public statement on what appears to be simple matters of fact." Exactly; the Incorporated Medical Practitioners' Association and some thirty-six matrons make definite charges against the management of the Hon. Officers, and the only dignified course for the officials to adopt is to meet the charges, and disprove them *if they can*. The *Medical Press* says:

"THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' EMEUTE.

The above body has for some time past shown signs of coming storms, which have recently broken over the heads of the Association with thunderous violence. The Incorporated Medical Practitioners' Association have taken the matter up, and have formulated a number of charges against the Council. Among other things, they assert, in effect, that a small knot of medical men have gained control of the Nurses' Association; that the Executive Council has been packed with nurses from Middlesex Hospital and Chelsea Workhouse Infirmary; that the funds of the Association have been badly administered; and that the criticism of members is stifled. This protest has been taken up emphatically by nurses and matrons far and wide, and has been made the subject of a question in the House of Commons. At a meeting of the Council of the Association on the 10th instant, the subject was discussed. The chairman, Sir Crichton Browne, stated that he was unable to answer the above-mentioned charges, because of certain pending legal cases. However, he invited free criticism at the annual meeting to be held on the 22nd instant at the Imperial Institute. Meanwhile, it is to be regretted that the Council is prevented from giving a public statement on what appears to be simple matters of fact. Is it, for instance, the case that the majority of members of the Executive are drawn from two institutions? Is the Association in debt? What has it done for the nurses? The matrons assert that the Council refused to call a special general meeting when legally requisitioned to do so in March, 1895. What is the answer to that definite issue?"

The *Charity Record* always has the courage of its opinions, and from its concluding remark on the subject of the Royal British Nurses' Association, it is evident the Editor is quite *au fait* with the "true inwardness" of the autocratic policy adopted by the Hon. Officers, the reasons

for which will no doubt be thoroughly exposed at a public inquiry.

"AN AUTUMN AGITATION.

It is true the Government, probably wishing for a fuller development of the case, have declined to sanction an official investigation as to the administration of the Royal British Nurses' Association. There is, however, to be an inquiry, and it is most desirable that it should be complete. And as this is a body promoted partly in the public interest, it is fitting that there is to be a public appeal and agitation. We hope (the Association having apparently been captured by a few medical men), this movement will culminate in securing for the nurses themselves the control of their own Institution. Being a woman's organisation, they should not have allowed it to have got out of their hands. So concerned are some of the members at what has recently taken place, that they have thrown down the gauntlet, so that we are to have a battle-royal between the controlling medical gentlemen and the dissatisfied matrons and nurses. A successful result for the latter can hardly be doubted. Protests against the administration having been of no avail, the malcontents have been driven to the agitation which is promised in the autumn. As the Association possesses a Royal Charter, the Queen and the Privy Council are to be appealed to. Mrs. Bedford Fenwick (who, at a meeting about ten years ago, founded the Institution), has, with some of her most active supporters, been very badly treated. It is alleged that, in her absence with others on the humanitarian work of nursing the wounded in the Græco-Turkish war, some of the Association's officers and members met and decided to omit her name from the Executive Committee. A number of nurses have protested "that the Association is practically controlled by five medical men with the assistance of their subordinates, and the nurses who are dependent upon them at the Middlesex Hospital"; "that the founders of the Association, who were originally promised permanent seats on the General Council, have been deprived of those seats"; and that the "officials have violated the Charter and Bye-laws." If the present controlling authorities seek to take from the nurses their rightful power over a Society, established for themselves as well as for the public benefit, then this agitation will doubtless sufficiently influence Members of Parliament to again bring the matter under Government notice. As to the ultimate issue of this contest, we hope and believe success will be found on the side of those who fought and defeated the futile opposition to the formation of the Association and to the granting of a Royal Charter."

The *Englishwoman's Review*—a most valuable quarterly journal which deals with women's work, and is most ably edited by Miss Helen Blackburn and Miss Antoinette M. Mackenzie—devotes two columns to the affairs of the Association. The resolutions unanimously passed at the Woman's Meeting held on the 13th inst. are printed at length, and the Matrons' Protest in full. By the medium of this journal, which is read by the thinking woman, we are glad to know that a class will be reached from which nurse

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