

Nursing Politics.

"QUITE SO."

FAILING to smash up the British Nurses' Association by the inaccurate statements concerning it during its formation, or by "smirching" the characters of some of its members in his paper, the *Hospital*, Sir Henry Burdett has of late years given active support to the policy of the Hon. Officers in their attempts to prevent the nurse members managing their own affairs, and to remove from its Committees the founders of the Association. But he must not imagine that he has been in the least successful in his little game of "ostrich," nor that his personal manipulation of the British Nurses' Association affairs is not perfectly well known and appreciated, and will in due time be publicly explained.

So long as the Hon. Officers and the members of the Executive and Council were true to the principles upon which the Association was founded, so long Sir Henry Burdett found it impossible to injure the Association. Unfortunately, after the Charter was won—largely by the work of the women who founded the Association—persons perched upon the hedge waiting to see "how the cat jumped," hopped down on the side of success, and then and there commenced the policy which has done so much harm and caused such grave discredit to the Association.

INSTEAD of the opinions of the leading nurse members being consulted and wisely acted upon, as in the past, young women were placed in authority in the office of the Association of Nurses—so euphoniously described in the *Hospital* as "the scum of the Nursing Profession"—who were proposed for office by Mr. Fardon upon the recommendation of Sir Henry Burdett. The disintegration of the Association was, under these circumstances, but a question of time.

YEARS ago we predicted the mischief which must inevitably result from the *commercial* manipulation of any professional body of women by outsiders, and we protest once again against British Nurses being thus exploited—the latest evidence of the danger being clearly exhibited in the issue of "Burdett's Official Nursing Directory," a publication in which are to be found hundreds of names of untrained and semi-trained women, who are thus held out to the public as trained nurses!

LAST week, Sir Henry Burdett published the following false statement about ourselves in the *Hospital*. The italics are ours:—

"A MENTAL ATTENDANT'S OPINIONS.

"A Mental Nurse' writes" (so says the *Hospital*)—"It is a lamentable absurdity that young women who

spend a goodly portion of their lives in hospitals for mental diseases, receiving training in the tactful management and the nursing of the insane, on coming out into the world, to make this intricate, if not the most trying and melancholy branch of the whole nursing profession, their calling, are not only depreciated, but they are refused the same recognition and privileges, extended to their more valued sisters in the medical and surgical line!" (this is delightfully Hospital-esque.) "They cannot be allowed membership at the Royal British Nurses' Association, so far as one lady on that Council is concerned, at any rate. Mrs. Bedford Fenwick has said that it would be a disgrace for the R.B.N.A. to admit as members women who devoted their lives to the cause of the insane, otherwise mental, nurses. I feel sure that the good families of London and elsewhere who, unfortunately, have needed and tried their services, with the physicians in attendance, and who should be best judges, will not agree with this. Nevertheless, it will be a revelation to me if anyone, through your valuable paper, could point out wherein lies disgrace in making a speciality of nursing mental disorders any more than those of fevers or a broken limb. Why should it not be considered as honourable. It savours of the mediæval half savage state of civilization, for then it was the poor insane patients, now it is the young women who elect to take charge of them that are held up to public contempt as something to be frowned down and avoided. I could not imagine anybody who, truly knowing the character of mental nurses' duties year in year out, and the mental strain consequently only too often involved, having the conscience to throw a straw in their way. If Mrs. Bedford Fenwick had spent a few years of her life as matron in one of our large asylums instead of at St. Bartholomew's Hospital it might not be unreasonable to suppose that she would be advocating the services of a competent mental nurse as being the best and most correct for surgical operations. Therefore, I venture to hope, even if I have no influence, that any person or persons capable of drawing so narrow and odious a comparison shall be for ever removed from a council for promoting the welfare of nurses as being incapable of judging what is for the best interests of everyone concerned."

OUR solicitors—for we have long ceased to communicate with Sir Henry Burdett through any other source—have sent the following reply, but we have only a faint hope, we must acknowledge, that, according to the rules of honourable journalism, it will appear in his paper:—

"14th December, 1897.

"To the Editor of the *Hospital*,

"29, Southampton Street, Strand, W.C.

"Sir,—Our client, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, has consulted us with reference to a letter appearing in the *Hospital Nursing Mirror*, of the 11th inst., headed, 'A Mental Attendant's Opinion.' That letter contains the following statement:—'Mrs. Bedford Fenwick has said that it would be a disgrace for the R.B.N.A. to admit, as members, women who devoted their lives to the cause of the insane, otherwise mental, nurses.'

"That statement is absolutely untrue; and, as your correspondent cannot possess one iota of proof in support of it, it must have been made with the deliberate intention of misleading your readers.

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