

The Nurses' Co-operation.

The affairs of the Nurses' Co-operation, to which we have already alluded in these columns, require a few further remarks on our part. The whole trouble lies in a nutshell. Sir Henry Burdett is, for his own purposes, stirring up strife, and urging the nurses on the staff to protest against what he is pleased to term "the mismanagement of their affairs," stating that "their interests are being imperilled by the two or three women who manage the Committee." We do not propose to enter into the rights or wrongs of the dispute, but the nurses should clearly understand that, if at the present moment they are powerless to manage their own affairs, the entire blame rests with those who drew up the constitution of their Co-operation. So long ago as March, 1894, we published an article warning the nurses against the very anomalous position in which Sir Henry Burdett desired to place them. On May 13th, 1894, application was made to the Board of Trade for their special licence to constitute the Nurses' Co-operation as a limited liability company, without the addition of the word "limited" to their name; the Memorandum and Articles of Association being signed by the following persons: Henry C. Burdett, Author and Statist; Herbert Hawkins, Physician; Mary Belcher, Midwife and Masseuse; P. Michelli, Hospital Secretary; Maria Napper, Matron; Charles Cheston, Solicitor; Capel Slaughter, Solicitor; the witness to the signatories being Honor Morten, Secretary.

The Constitution thus drawn up by Sir Henry Burdett and his friends was that the Co-operation should consist of a certain number of members, who should themselves derive no immediate profit from the Society. No nurse on the staff is able to be a member of the Co-operation. Still, to some extent, the nurses are recognised and their interests presumably safeguarded in the constitution of the Committee of Management. This body consists of not less than twelve, nor more than fourteen persons, six of whom are to be appointed by the members of the Co-operation, and six or eight to be elected as representatives by the nurses on the staff. The Committee of Management are to elect one of their number to be treasurer and one of their number to be secretary. Members of the Co-operation other than the seven signatories above-named, have to be elected by the Committee of Management. Each must be proposed by two members, and each must pay five guineas in one sum, or one guinea annual subscription, or the new member must be nominated by a hospital or institution paying five guineas a year annual subscription to the Co-operation, or twenty-five guineas in one

sum. Such, in brief, is the constitution of the Co-operation, and, as we warned nurses seven years ago, it means that, to all intents and purposes, the nurses on the staff are merely the servants of the Co-operation, and have practically very little control over the affairs of the Society of which they cannot be members. It is eminently characteristic that Sir Henry Burdett, who took the most prominent part in placing the nurses in so anomalous a position, should now pretend to be surprised that they lack the rights of membership. But we can hardly believe that the nurses will be so foolish as to take his advice and upset their Society when it has been so successful, and, in fact, pull the chestnuts out of the fire for Sir Henry Burdett's personal consumption. They cannot have forgotten yet how they were pressed to take two floors or so of his newspaper offices, at no small rental, for the purposes of a club, which—in the Strand—would obviously have been nearly or quite useless to them; nor the other truly rural scheme of the little Home at Clapham. The flies were wise enough not to walk into that parlour, and they are not likely, we imagine, to take that particular form of exercise just at present.

We learn, on good authority, that some hundreds of the nurses on the Co-operation have petitioned Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, the Patroness of the Society, as well as the Committee, to ask Miss Hughes to reconsider her resignation, and that Her Royal Highness has communicated with the Committee on the matter. It is sincerely to be desired that the ultimate decision of all concerned will make for the maintenance of harmony in the management of the Nurses' Co-operation.

Irish Poor Law Nursing.

On Tuesday, May 14th, 1901, at 11 o'clock a.m., at the Privy Council Chamber, Dublin Castle, an Order of the Local Government Board for Ireland, dated February 4th, 1901, will be appealed against by numerous Boards of Guardians under Section 14, of 10 and 11 Victoria, ch. 90.

The question involved is the right of the Local Government Board for Ireland to insist upon the appointment of qualified nurses and attendants in poor law infirmaries and hospitals.

We hope that the Local Government Board for Ireland will demonstrate its right to enforce the appointment of fully trained nurses in poor law infirmaries and hospitals. In our opinion it is necessary that the standard at present maintained should be raised rather than lowered.

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