

Deputation to the President of the Local Government Board.

A small Deputation from the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association, consisting of the Hon. Mrs. J. G. Talbot (Vice-President of the Association, and Chairman of the Executive Committee); the Viscountess Knutsford (a member of the Executive Committee); Miss Wilson (Treasurer); and Miss Gill (Secretary), was received at a recent date at the House of Commons by the Right Honourable Walter Long, M.P., President of the Local Government Board. Mr. J. G. Talbot, M.P., introduced the Deputation. Mr. S. B. Provis, C.B., permanent Secretary to the Local Government Board, Mr. W. E. Knollys, C.B., Assistant Secretary, and Dr. A. H. Downes, Poor Law Medical Inspector, were present. The object of the Deputation was to discuss details of a Statement which had been submitted by the Association to Mr. Long early in the year, touching upon the present condition of the Nursing in country Workhouse Infirmaries, and the dearth of Nurses obtainable for those Infirmaries.

The President of the Local Government Board listened to the members of the Association most attentively, and clearly showed that he took considerable interest in the questions at issue. Ample time was placed at the disposal of the Delegates, and some important points were discussed.

The serious dearth of Nurses available for the Poor Law Service was brought forward as the main cause for action, and the Local Government Board were urged to adopt measures for the special training of Nurses for Workhouse Infirmaries.

It was suggested that it may be practicable to train Nurses in the Metropolitan and other Poor Law Infirmaries, of *adequate size and organization*, and bind them to the service as Government officials, to work for a definite period, in provincial and country as well as in Metropolitan Workhouse Infirmaries.

The desirability of a sub-department of the Local Government Board being formed to deal with the whole question of Nursing in Workhouse Infirmaries was urged by the Deputation.

Mr. Long intimated that he had under consideration the possibility of making alterations in the existing regulations affecting the position of Nurses in Workhouses and Infirmaries.

He promised careful consideration of the suggestions made by the Deputation, but was unable to hold out much hope that the Local Government Board could themselves undertake the training and placing of Nurses.

TEXT OF THE STATEMENT SUBMITTED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD.

Sir,—We, the members of the Executive Committee of the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association, ask leave to bring to your notice the following facts.

For over twenty-one years the attention of the Committee has been given to questions affecting the sick poor in Workhouse Infirmaries.

To ensure the introduction of, at least, a proportion of duly qualified Nurses into these Institutions, the Association, during the first eighteen years of its existence, expended nearly £4,000 on the training of some four hundred Nurses for the Poor Law service. These Nurses were bound by agreement to work for a specified number of years in Workhouse Infirmaries only. By means of gratuities which supplemented their salaries, and of other inducements, a number of Nurses otherwise trained were encouraged to accept and retain posts in Infirmaries.

The initial difficulty was the reluctance of Guardians to employ qualified women as Nurses. With time this obstacle disappeared, and the demand for our Nurses became in excess of the number our funds enabled us to train. In 1895 we could only supply eighty-five Nurses in response to a request from Guardians for 199.

In August, 1897, the Order on Nursing was issued by the Local Government Board, and confirmed our opinion that the supply of trained Nurses for Poor Law Service had become too large a question to be dealt with by a Voluntary Association. We therefore decided on discontinuing the work of training Nurses.

During the three years which have elapsed since 1897 we have closely watched the working of the Order in country Workhouse Infirmaries, and we now lay before you the conclusions forced upon us by the facts.

1. The Order has, to a great extent, failed in providing a uniform standard of Nursing for country Workhouse Infirmaries.

2. The difficulty of obtaining and retaining trained women has increased. In 1900 a number of Boards seriously considered this question, and several of them passed important resolutions on the subject. (See Twenty-ninth Annual Report of the Local Government Board, Appendix B. pages 93, 126, 149, 152.)

3. Regardless of the instructions in the Order that the employment of Paupers should be discontinued, it is a fact that persons of this class are still largely employed in the capacity of Nurses. The lack of trained Nurses makes it easy, and in some cases furnishes an argument to the Boards of Guardians, to ignore the clause

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