

have advised them not to complain of the customs of a country they have come to work in; some of them have nearly starved owing to their want of tact and discretion. It is fatal to bring into Nursing life the Trades Union principles of so much work for so much money, so much time off, etc. I suppose all of us who come out to these colonies, hoped some day for something better than the daily drudgery of private Nursing, and the best foundation to lay for gaining a good position in the future, is to have a firm hold on the hearts of your patients. Let them look back with pleasure and gratitude to the perhaps many weeks you were with them, comforting them and their families night and day. Let them all speak of *how much* you did for them—not *how little*—and how little waiting upon, you required. Rest assured, when the time comes for them to help you, and show their gratitude, they will do so, whether you are English or Australian. Sydney may be different to Melbourne, for here Doctors certainly prefer well-trained women. But the Nurses who get on best, are those bright, trained women who round off their corners and cheerfully see the best side of everything. Such as these, the doctors take up, and keep them in work, naturally preferring young women. If they prefer Colonials, I suppose it is because they find that they accommodate themselves to colonial ways and manners more readily than we do. As to bedside nursing, I agree that there is much left to be desired, from what I saw both in Sydney and Melbourne, in the refinement required in public hospital nursing. But Australians are anxious to learn and not be behind the times; so, with proper supervision (and what Pros. are there that do not need a great deal of it?) they will, I am sure, before long not merit any reproach about their nursing. Incomplete training is very prevalent here, and it is a pity that the hospitals do not make a combined effort to establish the three years' system, for the Nurses would gladly avail themselves of it. There are so many Nurses, English and Australian, here already, and fees are lowered, that I repeat—those who can get work at home should remain there."

The Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association and the Bedford Guardians.

INSTRUCTIVE reports and correspondence have been printed during the past fortnight in the *Bedford Times*, concerning the friction which has arisen between the Guardians of the Bedford Workhouse and the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association, owing to the dismissal by the Guardians of a Nurse, provided to them by the Association, without just cause, and in fact simply, as far as we can gather from numerous official reports, because a minority of the Guardians objected to the Nurse being responsible in matters of discipline to an outside authority, although the discipline exercised by the Association was entirely for the benefit of the Institution and sick poor within its walls, and strictly in order according to the contract between the Guardians and the Association. We, therefore, publish with pleasure the following letter from the Committee of the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association to the *Bedford Times* :—

"Sir,—In view of the letters and reports which have appeared in your paper on the subject of the recent dealings

between the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association and the Bedford Board of Guardians, a statement from the Association appears to be necessary.

We take for granted that the readers of this letter will have seen those which have preceded it on the same subject, and are therefore aware of the attitude the Guardians have taken towards the Association.

After several inconclusive letters from the Clerk, who apparently wrote them without the authority of the Board, at the same time stating that the Guardians 'do not recognise the right of your Association to question them upon such matters,' the Guardians have at length given the following reply to our request for their reasons for dismissing Nurse Harcourt :—

'Nurse Harcourt came to the Bedford Workhouse through the agency of the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association. After she had been at the Workhouse a short time she expressed her distaste to certain portions of her duties. Before asking the Local Government Board to sanction her permanently, the Visiting Committee of the Guardians saw Nurse Harcourt, when she admitted that she had so expressed herself, and also that she considered herself primarily the servant of that Association, whose orders she would be bound to obey under penalties in preference to any orders of the Guardians.

'These and other circumstances induced the Committee to ask the Guardians whether they thought it desirable to apply to the Local Government Board to sanction Nurse Harcourt's appointment, whereupon the Guardians decided it was not desirable to do so.'

This statement practically verifies Nurse Harcourt's account of the proceedings, and reflects unfavourably on the vacillating statements of others, and may be summarised in a few words: (1) The agency of the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association is admitted and therefore its right to an explanation. (2) The Visiting Committee had no complaint to make against the Nurse. (3) Following on a cross-examination as to her relations with the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association, she is asked by the Visiting Committee to break off her relations with the Association, when she answers that she is under a bond to them and cannot do so. They report to the Guardians that she is acting as Nurse under the direct control of the Association, which is a misrepresentation. It implies that she must act primarily as a servant of the Association so far as her nursing duties were concerned; whereas it is clear that she meant she could not accept the permanent appointment on the conditions laid down, viz.: That she sever her connection with the Association, which had partly trained her and to which she was bound. If the imputation of undue interference on the part of the Association were correct, there might be some excuse for the action of the Guardians after representing the case to the Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association, from whom they had received the Nurse, but unfortunately for themselves the Guardians had not taken this plain and straightforward course. Instead of this, and knowing her relations with the Association, she is asked to break her bond, and on her refusing to do so, she is dismissed, and only after a fourth appeal from the Committee is an explanation forthcoming.

The Guardians therefore, according to the statement before us, admit having dismissed the Nurse because of her relations with the Association and for no other reason.

Analysing their own words we may set aside Nurse Harcourt's 'distaste' for certain duties, since she herself stated distinctly to the Guardians that she 'made no complaints,' at the same time we may remark that this 'distaste' is not to be wondered at judging by the report of what is expected of the Nurse as described in the *British Medical Journal* of August 18th. The other reason 'that she considered herself primarily the servant of the Association' is obviously the only ground to which any weight could be attached, and it is of the relations which subsist between the Nurses and the Association—the relations which have been

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