

made the ground for Nurse Harcourt's dismissal—that we wish now to speak.

The Bedford Board of Guardians appear unable to recognise the position of our Association as a charitable body working to ameliorate the sufferings of the sick poor in our Workhouse Infirmaries, and at the same time willing to help Guardians in obtaining the services of only well-trained Nurses of thoroughly good character for their Infirmaries.

The Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association was founded in 1879 to promote the following objects:—(1) To raise the standard of public opinion on the whole question of Workhouse Nursing. (2) To secure the appointment of trained ladies as Matrons in all separate Infirmaries. (3) To train and supply Nurses to Workhouse Infirmaries in London and the provinces.

We would draw special attention to the last clause. We train our Nurses in recognised Hospitals or Infirmaries for one or two years at an average cost of £20, and this absorbs the greater part of our funds. But when the Nurses are trained, how are we to secure their services specially for Workhouse Infirmaries? How do we endeavour to keep them out of the perhaps pleasanter paths of District, Hospital, or Private Nursing? We make them sign an agreement that in consideration of our paying their training fees they undertake: 'For the next three years (at least) to take such posts as the Committee will offer to them as day or night Nurses in London or the country, to resign such if desired to do so by the Committee, not to resign without permission, and to be considered as members of the Association.' The agreement further runs: 'If any Nurse shall leave the Association during her training, or the three years following her training, she shall be obliged to repay to the Association the sum of £10.'

In what way do we exercise our authority over our Nurses? Undoubtedly to the advantage of the Guardians. Our Nurses undertake not to resign an appointment without the sanction of the Committee, and this rule is clearly in the interests of Boards of Guardians, since through the influence of the Association, and on account of those very rules, Nurses are often persuaded to remain at a workhouse where the difficulties of the work would otherwise dispose them to leave soon after entering. It is obvious that this refers to the Nurse wishing to leave for her own reasons. We could have no power if the Guardians asked her to resign, for their own reasons. The Secretary is constantly writing to tell a Nurse that the Committee cannot consent to her retiring until she has given the work a fair trial, and that they expect her to stay at least a year in a post, and so forth. We encourage Nurses to stay on by medals, gratuities, &c. The correlative power to compel a Nurse 'to resign if desired to do so by the Committee,' is one to which the Guardians are more likely to take exception, but a good Board will never have cause to experience its effect. Only twice in the fifteen years' working of the Association has this prerogative been exercised. One case will suffice as an example. The Association had supplied Nurses to a Union Infirmary for nine years, and were under contract to fill whatever vacancies occurred. Owing to a change of administration which was clearly detrimental to the well-being of the Infirmary, viz., the placing of a staff of nine fully-trained Nurses and seven Probationers under an untrained Superintendent, which would have caused perpetual friction and would have been gross injustice to both Nurses and Probationers besides being against the principles of the Association, the Committee were compelled, most reluctantly, to question the Board on the subject. We may mention that in this case for months before any steps were taken by the Committee, the Nurses had been complaining and asking to be allowed to resign, but were encouraged to remain while the Committee hoped the Guardians would have acted more wisely. When the crisis came, the Committee were not called upon to request more than one of the Nurses to resign, for all of the others did so of their own accord. The Association is bound to

protest when, and only when, the action of the Guardians is strongly against their leading principles; but we emphatically affirm that there is no interference between the Board and the Nurses in ordinary matters, and when any protest has to be made for the protection of the Nurses, or in face of the principles of the Association, due consideration is given by the Executive Committee who are most careful to act only from motives affecting the public welfare.

Yet it is because Nurse Harcourt belongs to an Association which is governed by these principles that she is dismissed. We have heard that she leaves 'without a stain on her character,' that she has given satisfaction in her work. From her we have an emphatic statement that she was informed by the Master and the Committee that she must give up her connection with the Association, or cease to remain as Nurse to the Bedford Union. On receiving her reply that she was under an agreement, and could not sever herself from the Association, the Guardians dismissed her. On the 18th they asked her to stay, as she was quite satisfactory, and on the 21st she received a letter giving her a month's notice to leave. Could any Association, in these circumstances, do otherwise than request an explanation from the Board, and could any explanation be more unsatisfactory?

Thanking you for your courtesy in inserting this letter.

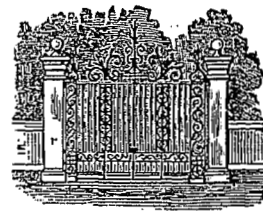
MERIEL S. TALBOT, *Chairman*.  
ROLAND HUMPHREYS, L.R.C.P.,  
THOS. SAVILL, M.D.,  
*Members of the Executive Committee*.  
J. WILSON, *Hon. Secretary*.

Workhouse Infirmary Nursing Association, 6, Adam Street, W.C."

## — Outside the Gates. —

### WOMEN.

#### UNIVERSITY EXTENSION: ITS FRIENDS AND FOES.



IN the August number of the *Nineteenth Century*, there appeared a most amusing satire and literary diatribe upon the University Extension Movement. Throughout the Oxford Summer Meeting, an account of which appeared in our last issue, no article in any journal or magazine was read with keener relish by the students who attended it, than that which, intended by its author to be a portrait, was in reality nothing but a gross, though clever, caricature. "University Extension," he says, "an incongruous mass of knowledge, is imparted by the University Extension. Shakspeare is sandwiched between Praxiteles and Electricity . . . as if miscellaneous information shared one property with mud, that if a mass of it be thrown, some at least has a chance of sticking. The folly is proudly perpetrated in the name of the University. Not only this, Oxford and Cambridge," he continues, "have devised summer festivals for their victims. The Universities are invaded with a mob of intellectual debauchees, whose ambition is far greater than their stomachs. Cheap smattering masquerades as a serious education. It is the habit of a democracy to find grand names for small enterprises." Thus Mr. Charles Whibley, the writer, goes on through several pages, till his readers are given to understand that University Extension

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