

as Lord SANDHURST—whose opinion upon Hospital questions carries the greatest weight both with the public and the medical profession—Lord BALFOUR OF BURLEIGH, Sir JOHN WILLIAMS (representing the Royal College of Physicians), Mr. HOWSE (representing the Royal College of Surgeons), and Mr. BRASS (representing the Chelsea Vestry).

This Committee, after an exhaustive inquiry, has announced the serious conclusions at which it has arrived, in language which, though studiously moderate, is most gravely condemnatory, and they practically endorse the truth of every statement made by Dr. PARKES, and go even farther than he went. We do not propose to discuss the purely medical aspects of the matter, but to confine our attention, in accordance with our invariable policy, to those points which concern the public and the Nursing profession. We are, however, somewhat surprised to observe that our medical contemporaries do not appear to recognize the deep significance of the new departure and principle involved in this matter. For the first time, a Medical Officer of Health has adopted the position—which we understand he is legally entitled to assume—of an inspector and a critic of the voluntary Hospitals in his parish, and for the first time a Vestry has assumed and exercised powers of control over such an Institution which have hitherto been so dormant that few were even aware of their existence. Dr. PARKES and the Chelsea Vestry appear to us to have initiated a system of procedure which will undoubtedly be imitated in other parishes in future, and the importance of which, to our voluntary Hospitals, it is quite impossible to over-estimate. We imagine that, with the advent of Parish Councils, moreover, this authority—hitherto unused, and, at present, somewhat shadowy—will grow stronger and more definite, and then one of two consequences will doubtless ensue—either the Hospital will attempt to assert its independence of the Council, or it will accept nominees of the Council upon its Board of Management. In these democratic days, the former course would probably end in the collapse of the Institution; the latter course would be the thin edge of the wedge which would eventuate in the Institution receiving support, to a smaller or larger extent, from the rates, and ultimately becoming a parochial Charity. Then we may expect to find a number of the smaller special and general Hospitals disappear while larger Institutions arise in districts which are now unsupplied with any medical Charity.

There can be no dispute that the result of this inquiry will do enormous damage to other voluntary Hospitals. Public confidence in the management of more than one Institution has been very severely shaken, during recent years, chiefly through their manifest reluctance to meet charges brought against

them; and now that an investigation, compelled to be made by public opinion, has resulted in such damaging revelations, it is impossible to calculate the limit of the resultant injury.

So far as Nursing matters go, it may be pointed out that the overcrowding, that is to say the insufficient cubic space for patients, at the Chelsea Hospital would, even if there had been no other sanitary defects, have been quite sufficient to account for a large mortality after operations; while, combined with defective drains, it explains the terrible death-rate from septicæmia, and the large number of deaths, even after operations which are in other Institutions regarded as trivial, because invariably successful. The lesson for our readers, from the Chelsea Hospital inquiry, is that no Nursing, however good and devoted—and we have much pleasure in expressing our conviction that the Nursing at this Hospital is in excellent hands—is of any avail when sanitary defects of the most grave nature are permitted to exist and continue.

#### THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

The Annual meeting held last week at Windsor, and which was very largely and influentially attended, gave excellent proof of the progress made by the Association during the past year. The Register which, after all, is the key-note of the work of the Association, continues to flourish. Since the institution of the Registered Nurses Society, the numbers of applications for Registration have increased in a most marked manner, and special notice was drawn in the Report to the fact that at the last meeting of the Registration Board, thirty new names were added to this roll, which now numbers considerably over two thousand names. There is good reason to believe that the Association has before it, during the coming year, not only a large amount of work, but it is to be hoped also, a considerable amount of prosperity. Of course, the expenses of the Royal Charter were very great, but it must be remembered that the Reserve Fund was set aside from the first for this particular purpose, as the Association was advised by an eminent judge at its formation, that it would cost it at least £1,000 to obtain a Royal Charter, an estimate which proved to be very accurate, and would have been much exceeded had it not been for the large amount of assistance which the Association received from its members. The reserve, however, was saved and ready for use, so that, when the opportunity came, the Association was immediately able to avail itself of it, and there can be no dispute that the expenditure represents a wise and excellent investment. We have no doubt ourselves as to the financial future of the Association; it requires assistance, at the present moment, in order to carry out, in the fullest measure, the new works which it has undertaken to fulfil; but with the increase of its membership, with the wise augmentation of the Registration fee, and with the professional and public assistance which the Association will undoubtedly obtain, there is every ground for believing that there will be no difficulty experienced in providing for its necessary expenditure.

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