

I am told that in one of the large Infirmaries the feeling was so strong against the measure that a general strike amongst the Nurses was threatened if it passed.

I am, &c.,
ROWLAND HUMPHREYS.

South Hampstead, N.W.,
August 25th."

Mr. Humphreys concludes by saying that "in one of the large infirmaries, the feeling was so strong against the measure that a general strike amongst the Nurses was threatened if it passed." We venture to think that these Nurses should not only threaten but carry out their threat, or it would be infinitely better if they had kept silence on the subject altogether. Either they felt it their duty to resort to these extreme measures, or they did not. On the one hand, they should not threaten what they do not mean to perform; on the other, the duty remains, and they should fight for their principles regardless of consequences. Until women are prepared to do this—to co-operate, to demand that what is right and just shall be accorded to them—so long will men act upon the principle that "no one has a right to any opinions who cannot enforce them," and they will legislate for women on this principle.

The injustice of the Bill just passed to the Nurses working under the Poor Law is essentially a woman's question; and we would point out that it is these Nurses who must make their opinion felt upon the subject. Unless they are interested enough in a question, which so nearly concerns them, to take the matter up, it is useless anyone else attempting to do so. Very few people value those things which they acquire with no trouble to themselves, and it may be that the Nursing profession requires some object lessons in this truism. Dr. Wickham Barnes, in writing to the *Lancet* upon this Bill, says:

"I must, however, acknowledge that our immediate success has been caused by our uniting with the Poor Law Officers' Association, led by such an able president as Mr. Rutherglen." Precisely. Co-operation, under an able leadership, carries with it the elements of success. We commend the idea to Nurses. Individually, they can do little or nothing for their profession. If they unite, putting all lesser interests aside for the public good, there is little that they cannot accomplish. We would remind our readers that some six months ago we drew their attention to this Bill, and the consequences it involved, but we regret to say that very few have moved in the matter. Now the Bill has become law. It is still open to those Nurses at present working under the Poor Law, however, to claim exemption from

its enactments, and we advise them to do so without delay. Clause 16 states:—

"Any officer or servant in the service or employment of Guardians, or any other authority empowered by this Act to grant superannuation allowances, may at any time within *three* months after the commencement of this Act signify in writing to such authority his intention not to avail himself of the provisions of this Act, and in that event it shall not be obligatory on him, notwithstanding anything in the Act contained, to make any contribution or submit to any deduction from his salary or wages under this Act, nor shall he be entitled to receive any superannuation allowance, gratuity, or other benefit under this Act."

Unless the Nurses at present working under the Poor Law therefore contemplate remaining in its service until they are sixty years of age, the one course for them to adopt is to obtain exemption immediately under this clause, and not to submit to an annual deduction from their salaries for the purpose of benefiting officers who, by length of service, become entitled to a pension. It is obviously most unfair that those who only serve for a time under the Poor Law should be *forced* to pay money towards a pension for which they will never qualify and obtain. From the point of view of the Infirmaries, also, the Bill is bad, for it encourages Nurses to hang on, when they are not really equal to their work, for the sake of obtaining a pension. We think that most of our readers will agree with us that there are not many women of 60 who, after many years of Nursing, are capable of doing ward work efficiently. Any Nurses who wish to express an opinion on the matter should write at once to the Clerk to the Guardians of the Union in which they are at work.

We would suggest the following letter as suitable:—

"SIR,—I hereby give notice that it is my intention not to avail myself of the provisions of the Poor Law Officers' Superannuation Bill, which, I understand, provides that, upon a certain deduction of salary, I am entitled to a pension, provided I remain in the service of the Poor Law until the age of 60. I therefore ask you to be good enough to signify my intention to the proper authority, and also to acquaint me with the fact when my application has been complied with.

I am, Sir,
Yours faithfully,

To the Clerk to the
..... Guardians."

In a matter in which they are so vitally concerned, it may be hoped that the apathy, the blindness to their own true interests, and the lack of public spiritedness with which so many Nurses are unhappily afflicted, will be overcome, and that they will express their views with no uncertain sound. We shall be glad to receive the opinion of any of our readers on the subject.

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