

for an "express letter." At the trial, the judge expressed his astonishment at such conduct, and Sir James Crichton-Browne was forced to admit that the certificate which bore the words, printed on its face, "CERTIFICATE OF POSTING OF A REGISTERED POSTAL PACKET" was a certificate for a Registered Letter. But he told the Jury—what he did not tell the Annual Meeting—that he thought it possible that Miss Breay might, on June 30th, have sent "half a dozen Registered Letters" to the Secretary of the Royal British Nurses' Association, and that he saw nothing to connect the particular receipt handed to him with the particular letter containing the particular resolution. Such a defence has to many seemed to be incredible, but our readers will find the precise words in our report of the case on October 17th (p. 320). The Jury, seeing Sir James Crichton-Browne in the witness box, hearing his evidence and all that he could say in his own defence, found, without the slightest hesitation, that he was influenced by a malicious motive in refusing to put Miss Breay's Resolution to the Meeting. No further justification for Miss Breay's action could possibly have been given, and, probably, no Chairman has ever before had his conduct so impugned and so condemned. It is, furthermore, to be noted that, after ten days' consideration, the Judge confirmed the verdict of the Jury by entering judgment for the plaintiff, and even after Sir James Crichton-Browne's Counsel had most ably argued that in law such an action did not lie at all, or, in other words, that Miss Breay had no remedy for the injustice to which she had been subjected. Sir James Crichton-Browne appealed to the High Court of Justice, and two Judges held that the action was without precedent, and that the finding of the court below must be reversed, Sir James Crichton-Browne being given his costs. One Judge, however, expressed surprise that the Resolution should have been dealt with in such a manner, and the other stated his opinion that Miss Breay had suffered a wrong, but that she should have sought another remedy for it. They refused leave to appeal from their judgment; and when Dr. Blake Odgers, Q.C., applied to the Appeal Court, a day or two later, for leave to take further steps he was refused, the Lords Justices concurring in the opinion that "there is no symptom of right in the people at such a meeting as this to have any question put at all," "that there was no right of any sort or

kind which has been violated." In other words, according to their lordships, no one has a legal right to propose a resolution of any kind or description at any Meeting. Furthermore, they held, in effect, that the Chairman of the Meeting is not only absolute but irresponsible—that he can rule as he pleases and be held answerable by no one.

We are chiefly concerned with the importance of this decision, because it obviously has the most wide-reaching effect; and we can hardly believe that, if the law be as stated, it will be suffered to remain in so unsatisfactory a condition. As the case stands now, Miss Breay has proved in a court of law that she registered her letter to the Secretary of the Association, and thus complied with the rules of the Association. Sir James Crichton-Browne has been condemned for his proceedings as a Chairman, by a Jury of his countrymen, in the City of London. He has furthermore received the reverse of commendation for his conduct from Her Majesty's Judges, although they held him free from legal liability. And the question has been now raised, thanks to Miss Breay's public-spirited action, and to Sir James Crichton-Browne's conduct in the Chair, whether the members of any Society, the shareholders of any Company, or those present at any Meeting, possess any right whatever of public condemnation, discussion, or criticism, concerning affairs in which they are mutually interested. Miss Breay has raised a question of the greatest public importance. We congratulate her upon the complete vindication which her statement at the Annual Meeting has received; and we are glad to know that both Nurses and members of the public are taking measures to prevent her suffering any pecuniary loss for the action which she has taken.

The Cholera at Plymouth.

IT is satisfactory to hear, in connection with the presence of cholera on our shores, that there is "absolutely no cause for anxiety." This is conclusive proof of the confidence of the authorities in the perfection of our sanitary precautions. Formerly we should have been panic-stricken if we had heard that cholera was in our midst, but now we can afford to hear with equanimity that the infected *Nubia* is anchored in Plymouth Sound, and that five doubtful cases are at present on the Hospital Ship *Pique*.

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