

reliable authority upon hospital management. Their remarks upon this very relevant matter, and Sir Henry Burdett's defence of his capabilities, which was evidently made in his customary grandiloquent and verbose manner, seem to have occupied much of the time of the meeting. In the result, the first recommendation was not accepted by the Governors, fifteen voting for it, and sixteen against. It is probable that those who were present, at the meeting, included the majority of the Governors who possess an accurate knowledge of the subject; and that, if the decision were left entirely to those who understand the practical effect of the various recommendations made, these would not be accepted. It was, however, determined to take a poll of the Governors upon the question; so that it will, doubtless, be decided according to the amount of influence which the advocates and the opponents of the scheme, respectively, can bring to bear upon the whole governing body.

It is impossible, however, to make the matter an impersonal one, because the advocates of the new scheme chiefly relied upon the assumed "expert" advice of Sir Henry Burdett to bolster up the revolutionary suggestions which they made; and as such an appeal always carries a certain amount of effect upon the ignorant, it necessitated a direct denial of this gentleman's abilities from those who opposed his views. It has been our duty on various occasions to point out the shadowy and specious nature of the claims to omniscience which are so often assumed to himself by Sir Henry Burdett; and we therefore confess that we agree with the opposition at Cambridge on this subject.

It is not difficult to describe this gentleman's career, and he must be judged by the results he has achieved. He became a medical student; he failed to become a medical practitioner. He acted as Secretary to two Provincial hospitals, and then, a good many years ago, obtained a financial post on the London Stock Exchange. His period of service in hospitals—including his uncompleted medical education—must therefore have been somewhat limited. Some twenty years ago, he began to pose as an authority upon hospital matters—when this field of philanthropy was fairly cheap, and almost entirely unexploited. His first effort, we believe, was to start the Home Hospitals' Association, in order to provide middle-class patients in illness or requiring operations, at small charges, with the comforts of a home combined with the advantages of a hospital. Some £15,000 was

subscribed by the public in 1877; at the end of ten years' work—as a medical journal some time ago pointed out—the Institution was as expensive as other nursing homes in London, and not only had it entirely failed in its object, but some £9,000 of the original amount subscribed had disappeared.

Secondly, Sir Henry Burdett, about 1885, started the Hospitals' Association, the object of which was to teach hospital managers and officials how to conduct their own affairs. This Association attempted to undertake the Registration of Nurses and effected a grotesque fiasco. For years, it was in difficulties, and it was impossible to obtain its Reports; but we believe it has recently been resuscitated by more capable workers. So far as Sir Henry Burdett was concerned its failure was abysmal, and evinced no proof of an "expert" intelligence in the conduct of its affairs.

If we had space, we might easily multiply the list of failures, and we have reason to believe that other schemes in which this gentleman is at present engaged, will prove to be equally unsuccessful.

We cannot but regret, therefore, that the Governors of Addenbrooke's Hospital should not be aware that Sir Henry Burdett's claims to be an expert are not recognised by those who weigh facts—not words. At the same time, there is much justification for their mistake. He has claimed omniscience in Hospital matters for himself so frequently, and so loudly, that a certain number of people have probably come to believe the claim to be valid. Judging by our past knowledge, we feel safe in predicting that the Governors of the Cambridge Hospital will greatly regret it in the future, if they permit themselves to be guided by the advice of Sir Henry Burdett.

Annotations.

CENTRES OF INFECTION.

We are not surprised to observe that the Medical Officer for Marylebone has presented a report upon the unsatisfactory state of the law with regard to litter in public streets in his district. The question, indeed, is an important one, especially to the ground landlord, for in former days the district was essentially a residential one, and the inhabitants were willing to pay a good round sum in rents, rates, and taxes, for the advantage of living in a neighbourhood of this description. Of recent years, however, nursing homes have sprung up on

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)