

Nursing Dispute at the Chelsea Infirmary.

L'AFFAIRE MORGAN.

FOR the past fortnight the Chelsea Board of Guardians have been discussing with much vigour the dispute between the junior medical officer, Dr. Horn, and the Matron, Miss De Pledge, in relation to the case of the man Morgan, the details of which appeared in a recent issue of this journal. It is to be deeply regretted that the Guardians did not at once accede to Mr. Jeffrey's suggestion for a full and fair inquiry by the Local Government Board, so that justice might be done to all concerned. The "hushing-up policy" of certain members of the Board is aggravated by the action taken last week, when by six votes to four the Committee of Enquiry was denied to those Guardians who realise the serious principle which is involved in the case in question.

DR. HORN'S LETTER TO THE CHELSEA GUARDIANS.

The following letter was handed in by Dr. Horn at the meeting of the General Committee on August 7th, and it was, presumably, immediately submitted to the Matron, as her reply to the letter was considered at the afternoon meeting on the same day.

Chelsea Infirmary,

August 5th, 1899.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I have only this week become acquainted with the contents of the report respecting the patient Morgan, furnished to you at your last meeting by Miss de Pledge. In justice to myself, I feel I cannot allow it to pass without comment. (1) It is stated in the report that, as no broad bands of strapping were used, the abdomen was left without support after the operation. To this statement I beg to give an unqualified denial; the abdomen was supported by a broad bandage or binder firmly applied round the patient's loins immediately after the operation, and kept in position by what are known surgically as "perineal straps." (2) The report further states that the man turned in his sleep on the night following the pillow incident. This was denied to Dr. Moore by the nurse in attendance on the patient, and also by the patient himself, who says that any attempt of the kind would assuredly have produced such pain as to immediately awaken him. (3) I regret that I cannot agree with the suggestion that "coughing" produced the dangerous condition of the wound, and in this view I am entirely supported by Dr. Moore and Mr. Davies, who examined the wound with me before the second operation. (4) With respect to the statement that the patient was a "fat, unhealthy sort of man, suffering from chronic bronchitis," I can only state that the man was under careful medical treatment for a considerable time before the operation, and that the operation was not performed until a fortnight had elapsed after he had been relieved of his lung condition. That we were justified in acceding to his request for an opera-

tion cannot be doubted, in view of the fact that the man is at present up and about the ward, relieved of his troublesome complaint, and will shortly be discharged to earn his own living. (5) The suggestion of a probable bed sore arising in a comparatively young man, who had only been in bed for fourteen days, is hardly worthy of serious notice. I regret that this consideration should have led Miss de Pledge to perform such an action—so inconsistent with the high standard of nursing maintained at this Infirmary—as to place a pillow under the patient's back, entirely without the knowledge of any member of the medical staff. In conclusion, I wish to call the special attention of the Board to a statement made by Miss de Pledge on two separate occasions to Dr. Moore and Mr. Davies, viz.: that when she placed the pillow under the patient's back she was quite ignorant that the case was one of ventral hernia, and that had she known it she certainly would not have done so. I cannot follow what I consider the undignified and unprofessional precedent of communicating with the public press on this subject, and I therefore beg to submit this statement to the Guardians. I am, etc., ARTHUR E. HORN.

MISS DE PLEDGE'S STATEMENT.

August 7th.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—My attention has been drawn to a report in the *West London Press* of some remarks made by Mr. Jeffery at the last meeting of the board in connection with the patient, Thomas Morgan. These remarks are further accentuated in a letter addressed by Miss Grove to a nursing periodical, and are so misleading and inaccurate that I feel a reply is necessary. Into the medical aspect of the case it is neither my intention nor my province to enter. The allegations are of a nature to carry with them their own refutation. Mr. Jeffery's assertion that I "ordered the patient to be moved" in spite of the doctor's orders is a travesty of facts. The soft pillow which, in response to the patient's complaint to me of "soreness" I placed under his back to prevent the formation of a bed sore, was to *avoid* the necessity of moving him. The Assistant Medical Officer's instructions, as I understood them from the nurse, were that the patient had not to be "turned on his side," and my endeavour to ease his position in the manner described was in deference to those instructions. I deny that there was any intention or desire on my part to interfere with "medical treatment." I regarded the matter entirely from a nursing standpoint, honestly endeavouring to do my best for the patient. Thirteen days had elapsed since the performance of the operation. The last stitch had been removed the previous day. The man was reported as convalescent, except for the bronchitis from which he suffered. He was taking ordinary diet, and was even permitted to indulge in the luxury of a pipe. Under such circumstances it never occurred to me that the placing of a feather pillow under his back could be construed into "interference" with medical treatment. The depth of the pillow when evenly pressed down does not exceed one inch in thickness, consequently the alleged "strain," which had a duration of five minutes, must have been considerably less than would be produced of necessity night and morning when the patient's back was washed, against the doing of which no orders had been given. With regard to

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