

strong expression of opinion on the part of their Matron, the Guardians sanctioned the dance, being influenced apparently by the consideration that "the nurses felt strongly on the matter, and would probably strike if their request for a dance, which only took place annually, were refused."

The case, therefore, if considered from this point of view, is somewhat as if the Colonel of a regiment had expressed his strong disapproval of a certain course of action on the part of his subordinates, but the War Office, fearing that if the desired permission were not given the rank and file might mutiny, had forthwith ignored the written remonstrance of the Colonel, and given leave for the desired pleasure. What possible discipline could be expected in that regiment in the future? Certainly the Colonel could not be blamed if he were unable to enforce it.

But, it does not seem at all certain that in the case of the Lambeth Infirmary nurses, any "strike" was contemplated. At any rate, one of the nurses has written to the *Daily Telegraph*, which published the current version of the business, protesting against the nurses being mixed up with it at all. The majority of them, she says, have never been consulted about any ball whatever. There may be one or two exceptions, but most of them know nothing about it, and have not been asked whether they desire a dance or not. "We think it a pity," she adds, "that superior officers and those in charge of the Institution should propose such amusements and then put the blame on earnest women who have to work hard year in and year out, and are too tired in the evening to take any interest in such pleasures." "This," says the *Telegraph*, "throws quite a new light on the business. Somebody appears to be anxious for a 'night out,' and to use the nurses as an excuse." We are inclined to think our esteemed contemporary is "very hot" when it hazards this suggestion. Most nurses would, we believe, prefer the opportunity of visiting their friends, afforded by a day and a night's leave, to that of dancing, even with the Guardians. Not a few must appreciate the incongruity of a ball in the hospital precincts, and, lastly, we think that the large majority of nurses would wish to be guided by the views of their Matron, and would not think of questioning the wisdom of her decision.

The nurse who has had the courage of her convictions, and has related the facts of the case, is to be congratulated on her frank and sensible letter. We hope that the fact that she has given expression to what, no doubt, many feel, will not prejudice her position with the powers that be. Knowing well the coercion, and intimidation which has been exercised in the past to prevent a free

expression of opinion on the part of nurses, notably when a nurse was threatened with removal from her professional register because she ventured to write a letter to this journal complaining of the mismanagement of the Secretary of the Royal British Nurses' Association, we confess to some apprehension on this score. We hope that our contemporary, having published this letter, will make it its business to protect the interests of its correspondent.

These remarks may seem unnecessary, but, having for many years past been acquainted with nursing politics, we know how almost invariably coercive and repressive measures are adopted whenever a nurse ventures to express an opinion on her own affairs. So systematic has been this repression that nurses have, to a great extent, learnt their lesson, and they submit, as a rule, in silence, rather than express an opinion which will bring down upon them the displeasure of superior officers in whose hands, to a great extent, rests the power to make or mar their future career. When, therefore, a nurse does arise inspired by generous motives, by the desire, as in the present instance, to uphold the honour of her cloth, to be loyal to the expressed wish of her Matron, and to give to the public her own version of a story which intimately concerns her, she is worthy of all honour. We are glad that one nurse at Lambeth, knowing that the Guardians had overruled the strongly-expressed opinion of their Matron, and sanctioned the dance, had the courage to write to the press and say that "the nurses had not been consulted about any ball whatever." We do not doubt that she has voiced the feelings of many of her colleagues.

If, however, the nursing staff at the Lambeth Infirmary do not desire to run counter to the expressed views of their Matron, they have the matter in their own hands. Let them boycott the dance, even if pressure is brought to bear to induce them to be present. They are free agents, there is no reason why they should attend it. There is every reason why they should not. We shall watch events with interest in the hope that they will demonstrate their loyalty to their Matron, and their consideration for the honour and discipline of their profession.

The nursing school of this infirmary has a reputation both for good nursing and discipline. It is, indeed, very doubtful if the former, without the latter, is attainable. Its members have now an opportunity of proving the mettle they are made of. If they show themselves possessed of courage, loyalty, and good sense, they will reflect credit not only on themselves, but on their profession. That they will do this we hope and believe.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)