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## Editorial.

### A NURSES' DEFENCE UNION.

WE recently reported the result of a libel action brought by Miss Martin, Matron of the Belper Isolation Hospital, against Dr. Richard Grammar Allen, Medical Superintendent of the same institution. Miss Martin pleaded that a letter to the Hospital Committee, in which Dr. Allen made sundry charges against her, was published in the press and led to her dismissal, and claimed damages for the injury caused her professionally. She proved her case after three days' trial at the Leeds Assizes, and the jury found a verdict in her favour awarding her £100 damages. In taking action for the protection of her good name and professional reputation, and in involving herself in the financial risk and personal worry consequent upon a lawsuit, Miss Martin did so on her own initiative knowing that she was not likely to receive monetary support from her professional colleagues. Nurses have not yet grasped the necessity for *esprit de corps* in matters of this nature, but it is significant that in the majority of cases in which trained nurses have felt compelled to protect themselves in

the law courts, in which there has been a medical defendant, the medical profession has risen as one man to contribute hundreds of pounds to pay the legal expenses of their colleague, and in cases of Hon. Medical Officers of the Royal British Nurses' Association, in which nurse members were compelled to seek legal redress against their personal action, these gentlemen did not hesitate to come upon the Association to pay their expenses out of its general funds. Thus the money contributed by nurses for the benefit of nurses has been used by the present Hon. Medical Officers of the R.B.N.A. to intimidate them, a most impudent misapplication of funds, and one which proves very sadly, in relation to our own profession, the lack of courage which is a common sequence of tyranny.

Remembering these facts it will surprise no one that at a recent meeting of the Committee of the Belper Isolation Hospital a letter was read from the Secretary of the Medical Defence Union suggesting that the authorities should help Dr. Allen in relation to the damages for which he is liable, as it did not come within the power of the Medical Defence Union in its corporate capacity to pay his ex-

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