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Editorial.

A QUESTION OF VITAL IMPORTANCE.

Sir Henry Burdett's attempt to accuse the Treasurer of St. Bartholomew's Hospital of suppressing a report presented to him by the Medical Council, "on the eve of the meeting of the Governors" at which plans for the reconstruction of the hospital were adopted, has ended, like many of his accusations, in a fiasco. The "suppressed report" has now, he says, come into his hands, and he proceeds to publish the report presented by the Medical Council to the Lord Mayor's Committee in February last. We have not yet heard that Sir Henry Burdett has apologised to the Treasurer of St. Bartholomew's Hospital for his imputation of dishonourable conduct. Assuredly an apology is needed, and we hope it may be demanded. Had all the reports presented by the Lord Mayor's Committee been furnished in full to the Governors of St. Bartholomew's, and that of the medical staff withheld, there might have been some ground for complaining of its suppression, though, even so, this would still be a distinct matter from the report said to have been presented by the medical staff to the Treasurer on the eve of the Governors' meeting.

Upon perusing this much-discussed document, the point of vital importance to the nursing staff—not only of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, but of all kindred institutions—is the suggestion by the Medical Council of the erection of the nurses' home away from the hospital. It is, of course, open to the medical staff to offer any suggestion which may seem desirable to them, but the question is essentially one upon which the opinions of nurses would be of value, for only nurses have that practical experience of the working details of such a home, and of the points of management involved, which affords special qualification for offering advice on this subject. It is obvious to every experienced nurse that

to place a nurses' home in any position away from the hospital is to make its proper administration almost impossible, and that this has been realised in the past is readily proved by the action of the Committees of the Metropolitan Training-Schools. Of the twelve large hospitals, only two—St. George's and Westminster—have their nurses' home away from the hospital, and, in connection with St. George's at least, there is abundant evidence that the nurses are keenly alive to the disadvantages entailed in the separation of the home from the hospital.

To take only one point of domestic management. If a nurses' home is at any distance from the hospital, either the nurses must be provided with a dining- and recreation-room in the hospital proper—thus multiplying expenses and necessitating the employment of a largely increased domestic staff—or they must walk backwards and forwards to the home for their meals. The effect of this, setting aside the percentage of nurses on the sick list from damp feet and colds, would be to necessitate an increase in the nursing staff; for a longer time than at present would certainly have to be allowed for meals. Again, if the Matron's quarters are placed in the home, she will be inaccessible to the hospital staff. If she is located, as she should be, in the hospital, she cannot exercise that supervision of the nurses' home which is desirable.

From whatever point of view it is regarded, we believe that any practical nurse will be strongly opposed to, and will be able to give cogent reasons for so opposing, the separation of nurses' homes from close proximity to the hospital buildings.

As many former nurses of the school, now holding influential positions, are members of the St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses' League, the Governors have ready to their hand a body which could give valuable advice on this matter. The League would, no doubt, be diffident about volunteering its opinion, but it would be worth the Governors' while to seek it.

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