

## Reforms Demanded at the Nurses' Hostel.

For some time past there has been considerable discontent amongst the residents at the Nurses' Hostel, Francis Street, W.C., as to the manner in which their business is conducted, and, in the words of one of the shareholders, things have "now reached an open rupture," owing to the discharge, after three weeks' trial, of the new Lady Superintendent, Miss A. E. Hulme.

The Nurses' Hostel is a company which is managed by a Board of Directors, composed of the Chairman, General Sir Allen Johnson, the Managing-Director, Miss C. J. Wood, Mr Lionel Earle, Miss Cooper, late Lady Superintendent of the Victoria Hospital for Children, Chelsea, and Miss Clegg, with Miss Nancy Paul as secretary.

Miss Hulme, who resigned the position of Lady Superintendent of the Nursing Sisters' Institution, Devonshire Square, W.C., which she had held for some years, in order to take the superintendence of the Hostel, and who had the highest testimonials as to her personal and professional qualities and business capacity, was appointed Lady Superintendent of the Hostel on the first of July of this year. During that month she took Sister's duty in the South Block, then a holiday until August 18th, and it was on that date that she took up her full duties as Lady Superintendent of the Hostel, and quickly gained the sincere respect of the residents for her very conspicuous tact and unvarying courtesy towards all.

### THE PETITION.

They therefore confidently approached her on a matter on which they felt strongly—namely, the management of the telephone department, and other details of organisation, and placed their complaints before her in a courteous and sensible Petition in which they stated, "we wish you fully to understand that we do not write to you in the spirit of animosity towards anyone, but we consider that as paying guests of the Hostel we have our rights, and we think that we owe no apology for speaking of them in a straightforward way to the right person."

These nurses stated in their Petition: "All of us who have known the Hostel for a short time or long, have suffered greatly from the mismanagement of the telephone department of the institution. All of us have again and again lost cases by it. Those who have answered the call have frequently said that we are out when we are in, with our names distinctly written on the slates in the halls, or made some other mistakes causing us to lose the case. Then again, if it has to be refused for us, owing to our being employed at a case, generally we are not told of it at all, so that we are quite unable to write courteously to the doctors expressing our regret. The harm that this has done us has been enormous." After referring to other matters the nurses formulated their requests as follows:—

"1. Perfect freedom to speak through the telephone for business purposes when necessary.

"2. That the greatest care may be observed in taking and delivering messages for us.

"3. That the greatest care may be observed in forwarding letters to us at the right address, and that they may be despatched as speedily as possible.

"4. That all rules and regulations may be *in print* and accessible to all nurses, and that they shall not feel obliged to comply with any that are not so printed.

5. That a visitors' book may be kept in each waiting room, and that all telephone messages and other messages, and visits of any sort, may be systematically entered in it."

The nurses received no promises from Miss Hulme, nor did they expect them, but they were content to leave the matter in her hands as she had only just come into office, and they believed she would do her best to give effect to their reasonable requests. On the 11th inst., after Miss Hulme had only been in office for three weeks as Lady Superintendent, the Managing-Director, Miss C. J. Wood, who had been away for the greater part of that time, called upon her and desired her to send in her resignation, and upon Miss Hulme demanding reasons for this summary, and, as she considered, most unjust treatment, Miss Wood, beyond telling her that she considered her unfit for the post, gave her no satisfactory reply.

Miss Hulme then wrote to the Chairman, Sir Allen Johnson, and asked for a hearing, to which he replied that, as she had a right to an appeal, the Board would see her at its meeting on the following Wednesday.

At the meeting of the full Board held on Wednesday, 19th inst., Miss Hulme naturally desired to know the reasons for her summary dismissal. No valid reasons were given to her, but she subsequently received through the Secretary a copy of the following minute:—

"The Board having given their best consideration to the question regret to have been obliged to decide that Miss Hulme's connection with the Hostel shall cease on the 29th of September, and that her salary shall be paid up to Christmas in lieu of notice."

Thus, *after only three weeks' trial*, this lady who took up office with eleven years' record of first-class work in positions of trust, is practically turned out of her post at ten days' notice, and without any redress whatever for this grave moral and professional damage.

This action of the Board has aroused the deepest indignation upon the part of the large majority of the nurses now resident in the Hostel, whose respect Miss Hulme has won by her courtesy and kindness. They therefore wrote to the Chairman expressing to him their great regret at the announcement, and saying, "this has come at an inopportune moment, too, for we had just presented a Petition to Miss Hulme, asking for certain minor reforms. She cannot now deal with this matter, so we desire to lay it before you."

Concerning the Petition which they enclosed to the Chairman, these nurses said:

"It is needless to tell you, sir, for you will see for yourself, that no spirit of revolt, antagonism, or even lack of charity can be traced in this letter. We simply ask, in a straightforward and courteous way, for what is only due to us. We positively cannot

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