

## The Defence of Nursing Standards Committee.

(The St. Bartholomew's Hospital Three Years' Certificate.)

The following Memorial has been sent to the Governors of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, by Mrs. Shuter, on behalf of the Defence of Nursing Standards Committee:—

TO THE GOVERNORS OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL.

SIR OR MADAM,—As a Public Meeting has been held, at which the enclosed resolutions were passed unanimously, it is felt to be fitting that a brief account should be laid before the Governors of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, individually, concerning the matters to which public attention has thus been drawn.

1. For the last twenty-nine years, the efficiency, the success, and the usefulness of the Nursing Department of the Hospital has been steadily rising, with advantage to the Institution and to the sick of all classes. The Nursing Staff believed that their arduous work was appreciated by the Medical Staff and the Governors, a belief in which they were encouraged by the Treasurer having stated in his official report for 1909, on the authority of the Medical Staff, that the Nursing of the Hospital was "of an unusually high standard."

2. In recent years it has been recognised in the leading Nursing Schools, as for many years it has been in the Medical Schools, that it is for the good of every school to attract to its service the best class of workers, by establishing a high standard of proficiency, by maintaining a keen *esprit de corps*, and by rewarding with preferment the most distinguished pupils. When a vacancy for the head of the Nursing Department occurs, the promotion of a former pupil of a Nursing School to the honourable position of Matron adds to its prestige, and is a source of encouragement to every pupil, past and present. This course has been wisely adopted by the leading hospitals in London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, and it was the natural expectation of St. Bartholomew's nurses—when, for the first time under modern nursing conditions—it is important to remember this fact—a vacancy occurred, that the new Matron would be one who had been trained by the late revered Matron, Miss Isla Stewart, and had proved her capacity to hold so responsible a post.

3. The greatest surprise and regret were, therefore, felt when the advertisement of the vacant post appeared, and it was found that the unusual course had been adopted of fixing an age limit of 40 for applicants. This at once excluded—and it is most respectfully submitted that it was intended to exclude—a number of certificated nurses of St. Bartholomew's who now hold the post of Matron at large London and Provincial Hospitals, who are greatly respected in their profession, and whose merits and qualifications, could they have been applicants for the vacant post, must have deeply impressed the Election Committee; and in competition with whom the appointment of a Matron's Assistant would have been improbable. Nor did

the advertisement require any further professional qualifications whatever beyond that "candidates must be certificated nurses," so that the three years' term of training and certification, so long the standard of the Nursing School of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, was not obligatory.

So much apprehension was aroused by the terms of the advertisement, that a Memorial was signed by 260 Certificated Nurses of St. Bartholomew's, and presented to the Treasurer and Almoners. As that Memorial only received a curt acknowledgment from the Clerk, and as it sets forth the whole position, it is respectfully submitted that its contents should be communicated to the Governors.

4. On May 26th, the Election Committee appointed as Matron of St. Bartholomew's Hospital a lady who is one of the assistants of the Matron of the London Hospital, and trained in that Institution, which certifies its pupils as proficient after only two years' work in the wards—a standard considered insufficient by all other leading hospitals, by the Local Government Board, and certain other Government Departments, for the Nursing Service of the Territorial Force of the City and County of London—No. 1 General Hospital of which is entirely staffed by nurses holding the necessary qualification of a three years' certificate from St. Bartholomew's Hospital—and by the Governors of St. Bartholomew's Hospital since 1881, when the three years' system of training before certification was adopted. It is needless to emphasise the depreciation of the value of the three years' certificate of St. Bartholomew's and of the high standard of training enforced for twenty-nine years by the Governors, which must follow the decision of the Election Committee that the two years' certificate of the London Hospital is a sufficient qualification for the Matron of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, if the Governors permit that decision and judgment to be finally accepted.

5. This is considered a fitting opportunity to call the attention of the Governors to the condition of the ancient houses composing the Nurses' Home. For many years these houses have been considered insanitary and in many ways defective. Only last year the Treasurer reported to the Governors on their "general unsuitability," and added "I must express the extreme anxiety with which I regard the possibility of a fire occurring in certain parts of the Home—the structural arrangements being such that in the event of an emergency the consequences could not fail to be very serious."

It is very respectfully submitted to the Governors that the continuance of such dangers and discomfort to their Nursing Staff, and the reasons why the same have been permitted to continue for so many years; deserve their earnest and speedy consideration.

6. The nurses feel confident that the great body of Governors cannot be aware of the facts now submitted to them; that they will not approve of the lack of appreciation shown by the Election Committee of the devoted services rendered for twenty-three years to the Institution by the late Miss Isla Stewart, whose efforts have caused the Nursing Department to be held in the highest esteem throughout the whole nursing world; or that with

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)