

A SECRET COMPACT.

WHAT IS IT?

Speaking at the Special Meeting of the Royal British Nurses Association on January 18th, Mr. Herbert Paterson, the Medical Hon. Secretary, said:—"It has not been found possible to insert in the agreement or in the bye laws all the conditions on which we laid stress, for the simple reason no means have yet been devised of determining beforehand the action of a body which is yet unborn. Until the Royal British Nurses' Association and the College have ceased to exist, and the Royal British College of Nursing has arisen triumphantly from their ashes, no legal pledges can be made as to the future action of the Council. But the conditions (other than those which it has been possible to incorporate in the bye laws) on which we agreed to the principle of amalgamation, have been embodied in a letter signed by Mr. Stanley and Sir Cooper Perry. Strictly speaking, it is not a legal document, but I am sure we may say that in the circumstances it is at any rate of equal, if indeed not of greater, value to us than a formal document, signed, sealed and delivered. It is perhaps a good working rule never to trust a committee of whomsoever it is composed. But in this instance I feel sure that we may with confidence trust Mr. Stanley and Sir Cooper Perry, being assured that they will, as in honour bound, see that our wishes are carried out when the new Council is constituted."

We are requested by Miss H. Hawkins, a Life Member of the R.B.N.A., to insert the following correspondence which has taken place between her and the Secretary of the Association.

COPY OF LETTER FROM MISS H. HAWKINS TO THE SECRETARY OF THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

127, Friern Barnet Road, N.

January 25th, 1917.

DEAR MADAM,—I shall be obliged if you will forward to me at your earliest convenience a copy of the letter containing conditions concerning our affairs between Mr. Stanley and Sir Cooper Perry, of the College of Nursing, Ltd., and the Hon. Officers of the Royal British Nurses' Association, referred to by Mr. Herbert Paterson at the Special Meeting of the Chartered Corporation on January 18th last, as I am of opinion that no such private compact should have been entered into without the consent of the members of the Royal British Nurses' Association.

I am, Yours faithfully,

HENRIETTA HAWKINS,
Life Member, R.B.N.A.

COPY OF LETTER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION TO MISS H. HAWKINS.

Royal British Nurses' Association,
10, Orchard Street,

Portman Square, London, W.

February 15th, 1917.

DEAR MADAM,—Your letter of the 25th ult. has been submitted to the Executive Committee

of the Corporation, and I am instructed to inform you that the matters referred to by Mr. Herbert Paterson were the subject of correspondence which passed between the Association and representatives of the College of Nursing, Ltd.

The Executive Committee regret that they are unable to comply with your request to be furnished with a copy of this correspondence, as it would be contrary to all precedent and impossible to carry on business if every member of the Corporation were entitled to be furnished with a copy of the Correspondence of the Association.

The Executive Committee note your opinion that no private compact should be entered into without the consent of the members of the Association, and I am requested to call your attention to the fact of which you are apparently unaware, that, under the Charter, the Executive Committee have (subject to the Powers vested in the meetings of the Corporation and the General Council), the sole and entire management of the business of the Association, and that the carrying into effect of your suggestion would involve calling a General Meeting of all members of the Association whenever any agreement had to be entered into.

I am, Madam,

Yours faithfully,

ISABEL MACDONALD,

Secretary.

Miss Hawkins,

127, Friern Barnet Road, N.

It will be observed that this reply evades the direct issue. Mr. Paterson, as reported in the *Nurses' Journal*, the official organ of the R.B.N.A., alludes to one special letter embodying conditions agreed upon, and signed by Mr. Arthur Stanley and Sir Cooper Perry, of the College of Nursing, Ltd., and to claim the right to enter into a secret arrangement with these gentlemen, which may affect every nurse member of the Corporation, cannot in our opinion be classed as "management of the business." The Council is the governing body of the R.B.N.A., and we do not find it reported that that body has been consulted. Unless there is something in this letter which the Hon. officers of the two Corporations fear to make public there can be no possible reason why the nurses should be kept in cuttle fish darkness concerning their own affairs. Such methods brought discredit on the R.B.N.A. in the past, and will certainly not be tolerated in the future. The signed agreement should be published forthwith in the *Nurses' Journal*, and the nurse members given an opportunity of discussing it.

PETITION TO THE PRIVY COUNCIL.

A Petition for the grant of a Supplemental Charter, to a Body to be named "The Royal British College of Nursing," has been presented to the King in Council as notified in the *London Gazette* of the 23rd ult. It has been referred by His Majesty to a Committee of the Lords of the Council for consideration and report.

All petitions for or against such grant should be delivered at the Privy Council Office on or before the 23rd day of March 1917.

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