

AN INDELIBLE STAIN ON THE NURSES' CO-OPERATION.

An indelible stain will remain for all time on the nursing staff of the Nurses' Co-operation. Having authorised their representatives by about 200 signatures (backed by a promise of one guinea each) to institute certain proceedings to obtain for the nurses (1) Membership of their own Co-operation, (2) Representation on the Home Committee of the Howard de Walden Club, they not only ran away and left the representatives when the Hon. Members threatened to wind up the Co-operation, but of their own accord have now deprived three of these ladies of their means of earning their living.

At the annual meeting held on Friday, the 6th inst., at 6 p.m., Miss Marie Murray (trained at the London Fever Hospital), Miss Christina J. Mackay Paterson (St. Thomas'), Miss Catherine A. Mitchell (the London), were elected nurses' representatives. Never before had they taken any public part in the interests of the Nurses' Co-operation. Within twenty-four hours of their election, however, the members of the Committee of Management received a supplementary Agenda, authorised by these three nurses (and presumably a fourth) which was as follows:—

IMPORTANT ADDITION TO AGENDA.

To consider the resolution presented by certain nurses' representatives on behalf of themselves and other nurses "that in the interest of the Co-operation it is desirable that certain nurses should be removed from the nursing staff, and to move that this be done forthwith."

No names were mentioned.

The meeting took place on Tuesday, February 10th, at 5 p.m. Three of the "agitators" were present as members of Committee. Three former representatives were summoned to appear at the "bar" if called upon. A lawyer was at the left hand of the chairman (Mr. Harold Low, M.R.C.S.). After the minutes had been signed, the Chairman announced that Miss Murray, Miss Mitchell and Miss Paterson had given him a letter on behalf of themselves and sixty nurses of the Co-operation, in which amongst other things they said "We will do our best to remove these agitators from the Nurses' Co-operation, and are convinced that they are causing this mischief." The Chairman then told these ladies that they must now submit the names. Miss Murray proposed the first, and Miss Geraldine Bremner seconded; Miss Roberts, R.R.C. (at one time Lady Superintendent of Co-operation) and Lady Makins, R.R.C. (formerly a Sister at St. Thomas' Hospital) accounted for the second; Miss Geraldine Bremner and Miss Charlotte B. Leigh, R.R.C. for the third. A ballot was taken, these nurses were asked to resign, which they very properly refused to do.

Miss E. Maude MacCallum submitted that the supplementary Agenda was out of order, and that

the very serious step of depriving three people of their livelihood ought not to be rushed through with such indecent haste, that at least seven days' notice should have been given. The Chairman ruled that the Agenda was in order, but volunteered the statement that the Hon. Members had not initiated this matter, nor had they ever thought of doing so, that it was entirely the work of the Representatives (newly elected) and their backing of sixty. He also added that there was nothing whatever to be said against the honour or professional ability of these ladies, but only that their colleagues wished them to resign. Miss MacCallum pointed out that the Hon. Members present, Miss Leigh, Miss Roberts, Lady Makins, and Miss Christie, shared the responsibility equally with Miss Murray, Miss Bremner, Miss Paterson, Miss Edith M. Plomley, and Miss Mitchell, as they also voted that these ladies should resign.

The Chairman suggested first, that the Representative concerned should leave the room while the ballot and discussion took place. (This she refused to do, and was upheld by the lawyer in her right as a member to remain), and secondly, that the matter before the Committee should be "privileged." Miss MacCallum, however, announced that as the honour and livelihood of the three Nurses' Representatives concerned were at stake, they reserved to themselves the right to make whatever use of publicity they thought fit, especially as an Hon. Member of the Society [Sir Henry Burdett, Ed.] did not scruple to make copy for his two papers of the Nurses' Co-operation affairs.

Taking it all round, neither the Hon. Members nor the Nursing Staff have come creditably out of this business, the one bright spot being the handful of women who, in spite of all difficulties and dangers, have held firmly to their purpose and have obtained for the nurses many of the benefits they set out to obtain. We hope later to be able to publish their names; at the moment it is dangerous to do so, as Miss Edith M. Plomley, another Nurses' Representative, suggested that all who had taken part in this agitation should be forced to resign.

To the ordinary outsider there is a sense of mystery about this Nurses' Co-operation affair. Here we have nurses who have never done anything but try to benefit their fellow nurses. They freed them from the National Health Insurance; they originated, and carried through in the face of much opposition, a scheme for insurance which has proved an undoubted success. They originated the Benevolent Fund, and lastly, as was announced at the annual meeting, after two attempts, they have induced Mr. Bentinck to alter the Agreement, and allow nurses to become members of the Home Committee of the Howard de Walden Club. Yet they are asked to resign by the very people whom they have benefited, and upon refusing to do so have been summarily dismissed. Is there some master-hand directing this policy for his or her own purposes; if so, whose is it? Who,

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