

We presume this Board of Guardians would take the same drastic measures if the medical staff appeared with beards? These appendages really are unhygienic in surgical practice and should be severely condemned. So far the Press and Poor Law Guardians have not tackled the male sex on this question!

We have received the following important communication, which we have pleasure in publishing:—

You have, I believe, previously referred in your columns to the action of the West Ham Board of Guardians in making a rule that all future employees must be members of a Trade Union affiliated to the Trade Union Congress. All present members of the staff were at the same time "requested" to join such a Trade Union.

As you are probably aware, the medical and nursing staffs of the Guardians' Hospital, known as the Whipps Cross Hospital, made united protests against any such compulsion being put either upon themselves or upon their future colleagues. And it is well known that they received the full support of the British Medical Association and of the College of Nursing in their protests. In regard to medical staff no immediate action was necessary, beyond protesting, as there was no present or prospective vacancy. With the nursing staff it was otherwise, as probationers are constantly joining and from time to time trained staff, such as ward sisters, are required.

I am now glad to tell you that at their last meeting, on October 16th, the Board reversed their former decision, by the substantial majority of 29 to 13, and admitted the right of doctors and nurses to join, instead of a Trade Union, their own voluntary professional organisations. This happy result is due to the absolute solidity and loyalty of the whole medical and nursing staffs. Not one of the existing staff yielded to the "request" to join a Trade Union, and the newcomers, both sisters and probationers, on learning the state of affairs, one and all declined, at whatever personal sacrifice, to conform to such a regulation.

The Board's new resolution reads: "... the Board to recognise as Trade Unions within the spirit and meaning of the Board's resolution those trade or vocational societies, not affiliated to the Trades Union Congress with which it is possible for the Board to negotiate on all matters appertaining to the staff."

Rendered into plain language, this is a complete recognition of failure to coerce the doctor and the nurse into any association other than those they may of their own free will choose to enter.

I shall be glad if you can give the fullest publicity in your valuable paper to the outcome of this struggle, partly to remove the shadow which, as we fear, has rested temporarily on our Training School for Nurses, and, secondly, because I think the fight won by our staff has also a wider importance and is, indeed, of vital interest to nurses in general.

I might add that many members of the Board are to be congratulated on their moral courage in retracing their steps when they perceived their error of judgment. Some of them did so in the face of severe criticism from their own political party. The Board has borne a good name for progressive-ness and for good treatment of their staff. I sincerely trust that the former cordial relationship will very soon be re-established. It has been with infinite regret that the staff of the hospital has found itself in opposition to its employers.

We congratulate the nursing staff in the stand they have made against the principle of coercion, and we hope that officials of poor law infirmaries will at the same time cease coercing the nursing staff to join the College of Nursing, Ltd. We have before us several complaints on this matter. The nurses fear discrimination against promotion if they object to join, and support financially, this Company.

Private nursing should be one of the most popular branches of the profession, as it gives the nurse so much scope for her own individuality, and therefore of encouraging her to do her very best for the patient. But many things tend to make it unpopular. No young nurse should try to work "on her own," as she is so often out when required, and in when no work comes along. As one of a Society of nurses she has the benefit of give and take.

We have observed also of late years no hesitation upon the part of unscrupulous persons to fail to pay the nurse's fee—such persons who have perhaps been sick in hotels and rooms, moving away leaving no address, to the ultimate loss of remuneration for good work done. Now private nurses are apparently faced with another danger.

Many hospitals admit paying patients, and in some instances the nursing staff is insufficient to provide specials in serious cases. This means that the Matron may with the consent of the Committee requisition an outside private nurse, and where the hospital makes itself responsible for paying the nurse's fee, very agreeable up-to-date cases are cheerfully nursed by outside co-operation nurses. But when the Committee of a hospital, which admits paying patients, whilst requisitioning the services of a private nurse, by slim arrangement refuses to make itself responsible for her fee by getting the patient—of whose financial status the hospital may know nothing—to sign the agreement form, the position is serious, and when such a patient defaults, and leaves the hospital, the Secretary having carefully obtained the money owing to the institution, and the Society to which the nurse belongs is calmly informed first by the officials who have requisitioned her services—and then by the hospital's solicitor—that the patient and not the hospital is responsible for the fee (which he has for months omitted to pay), it is time that a private nurse realised before accepting a case from such a hospital, that it is not improbable she will be giving gratuitous service.

This unjust and ungenerous system is countenanced and enforced by the Committee of the Willesden General Hospital, and a member of the Registered Nurses' Society is still waiting for the fee she earned there last June.

We cannot believe that the subscribers to the Willesden General Hospital know of, or would support the Chairman, Mr. G. J. Furness, and the Committee in such a mean policy towards a working nurse—who lives on the fees she honourably earns; and we hope the Committee will not be permitted for the future to employ nurses they do not intend to pay. We should like to condemn their conduct in stronger terms so despicable do we find it. But enough said. We warn private nurses against accepting cases from the Willesden General Hospital.

The Marchioness of Ailsa, President, performed the opening ceremony at a sale of work in aid of the Nurses' Club, Bath Street, Glasgow, early in October. She was accompanied on the platform by Lady Dunlop, Mrs. Pollok, Ayr, and Dr. and Mrs. Macgregor Robertson. In a short address her Grace declared the sale open and wished their enterprise every success. The various rooms of the club were laid out in attractive stalls, and brisk business was done throughout the afternoon. The comforts offered by the Club are greatly appreciated.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)