

Romance of the Hospital

BEXHILL LADY TO MARRY SOUTH WALES MILLIONAIRE

The greatest interest and gratification have been caused at Bexhill by the announcement of the engagement of Miss Maud Mary Cooper, eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs George Cooper, of Hesse House, Haddock's Hill Road, Bexhill, to Sir William James Thomas, the famous Welsh coal-owner and philanthropist.

The engagement has all the elements of a romance. The bride-elect is the assistant matron of the King Edward VII Hospital at Cardiff, an institution in which Sir William has taken the most generous interest. A few months ago he gave £100,000 towards the establishment of a Welsh University Medical School at the Hospital and he is known for many other princely benefactions in South Wales, including a gift of £10,000 to the Cardiff Infirmary. The date of the wedding has not been fixed, and it is not known where the happy event will take place.

THE BRIDE-ELECT AND HER FAMILY

Miss Cooper, who has received many congratulations from her friends at Bexhill, is a member of a family which has been long connected with the town, and is very highly esteemed. Her father was for many years closely connected with the public life of the borough. He was a member of the Urban District Council, was elected to the first Town Council as a member from the Old Town Ward, and sat as an Alderman for many years. Mr Cooper also represented Bexhill for a time on the East Sussex County Council and is at present the Chairman of the Old Age Pensions Committee. Throughout the whole of his long and honourable connection with public affairs he was known as a stalwart advocate of economy.

Miss Cooper has a sister who resides at home, and she has a brother in the Grenadier Guards, who was wounded at Loos.

A HOSPITAL MEETING

Born at Hastings, she spent her childhood at Bexhill, where her sympathetic nature and many accomplishments secured for her the regard of many friends. Adopting nursing as a vocation, she underwent a course of training at the Staffordshire Hospital at Stoke-on-Trent, where she remained some six years, afterwards going to the Bristol Hospital. Two years ago she took the position of assistant matron at Cardiff Hospital, where she met its generous benefactor, Sir William James Thomas, with a result that has now given the world, which dearly loves a romance of real love, such a topic for pleasant talk and congratulations. It had been decided to withhold the public engagement for the time being but it has lately been an open secret in Cardiff, and the announcement has proved highly popular.

Of late Sir William has been prominent in hospital work, which he has assisted by his powers of organisation as well as by his princely subscriptions, and it will be considered a very happy and appropriate consummation that he should have chosen for his wife a lady distinguished for her practical sympathy for suffering humanity, and her gifts for hospital administration. The work of the future Lady Thomas is spoken of very highly at Cardiff.

COAL KING

Sir William James Thomas was born in the Rhondda Valley, where his residence Brynnwel Hall, Yuyshir, is situated. He is one of the most popular and generous employers of labour in the South Wales coalfield, and it is no exaggeration to state that the practical interest he has shown in the welfare of the working classes has made him an idol among the people.

When a lad, in order to gain practical experience of the mine, he worked for some time in the higher stages of the business at the Ynyshir Collieries, then owned by his grand-father, the late Mr James Thomas. He has always been keenly alive to the needs of the poor, and his munificent donations to hospitals and other institutions for the alleviation of suffering have made his name a household word in the South Wales coalfield, Cardiff, Newport, and Porth. Hospitals have been the principle objects of his benevolence, while his handsome donation towards the Welsh National School of Medicine enabled a valuable institution to be founded.

Sir William, who is a member of the Glamorgan County Council and other public bodies, is a member of the South Wales Coalowners Association, and is connected with a colliery undertaking at Bedwas. He is a director of the Barry Docks and Railway Company.

In 1914 the honour of knighthood was received. Since the outbreak of the War Sir William has shown the greatest solicitude for the care of the wounded. It was mainly through his instrumentality and generosity that the scheme for a Welsh War Hospital was carried through, and since its establishment in September, 1914, he has been most assiduous in promoting its welfare.

Although he is an extremely wealthy man, and judging by the extent of his benefactions alone is no doubt a millionaire, Sir William James Thomas is described as a man of simple dignity. He is in the prime of life, has a fine presence, possesses a very genial temperament, and is moreover, a very accessible man.

Bexhill Observer 11th November 1916 P1060232