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Editorial.

FREE-BORN BRITISH SUBJECTS.

A letter addressed to the press by the Earl of Mount-Edgumbe in regard to the registration, as midwives, of the nurses of the Cornwall County Nursing Association contains several points which demand comment. In the first place, he claims "all our village nurses are fully qualified as holders of certificates of the L.O.S." The assumption that a woman is qualified as a *nurse* because she has been trained for three months as a *midwife* is one which is far too common, and too much emphasis cannot be laid on the fact that three months' training in midwifery is not a royal road to nursing.

The primary object of the letter referred to is to explain to the public the steps which have been taken by the Cornwall County Nursing Association in regard to the registration of their staff as midwives, more especially because "seven or eight other County Nursing Associations are being hindered in their registration" by the delayed action of Cornwall.

The point under consideration by the Association was apparently whether its nurses should be allowed to register under the Midwives' Act, and a joint committee, consisting of three members of the Association and three members of the medical profession, was convened to consider the subject. Lord Mount-Edgumbe's view is that "it would be unfair to preclude them from their right to be registered, as after next April they will otherwise be debarred from acting as midwives."

This Joint Committee, after discussing the question, unanimously resolved "that if the County Nursing Association would make rules to ensure (1) that their nurses are not to attend a confinement without a doctor in cases where the total earnings of the patient's household exceed 30s. a week, and (2) that the nurse shall never interfere with the patient's selec-

tion of her medical attendant, there could be no objection to the nurses being registered and practising under the Act."

The Committee have, in short, decided that if the nurses of the Association will undertake to attend only such cases as are not in a position to pay a remunerative fee they are welcome to register as midwives and attend the un-lucrative cases. Does not this attitude of mind explain some of the opposition to the Midwives' Bill, and prove that, like that to the Nurses' Bill, it may not be wholly disinterested?

But another point seems entirely to have escaped the attention of the Committee, namely, that the law of the land requires every woman practising midwifery to be registered under the Midwives' Act after a given date, and every woman who is qualified to register is at perfect liberty, as a British subject, to do so without asking permission of any Association. The Association can, of course, say, if it chooses, that those of its nurses who register as midwives must resign their connection with it, in which case public indignation would certainly be aroused, for to prevent a woman eligible for registration as a midwife from becoming registered would be not only an unwarrantable and high-handed action, but it would damage her professional status and her wage-earning capacity.

The question is to be finally settled on Saturday, July 30th, by the Executive Committee of the Cornwall County Nursing Association, and we earnestly hope due weight will be given to these facts, otherwise, as Lord Mount Edgumbe points out, they will act unfairly by their nursing staff. Further, they will place themselves in a most untenable position.

The incident is of importance as showing the attitude of committees to the nurses they employ, and the grandmotherly oversight exercised over their actions in matters in which they are indisputably free agents.

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