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Editorial.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE POOR LAW.

The names of the Commissioners who have been appointed to serve on the Royal Commission on the Poor Law are names which carry weight and which will be generally acceptable. There is, however, a serious omission in the constitution of the Commission, inasmuch as with the exception of Dr. Downes, who is a Local Government Board official, there is no medical practitioner upon it, neither does it include any trained nurse with a knowledge of poor law administration. Considering that it was a Departmental Committee of the Local Government Board, of which Dr. Downes was a member, which recommended the recognition of women at the end of twelve months' training in workhouse wards as "qualified nurses," we fear there is not much hope that the Commission numbers amongst its members those who have an expert knowledge of the needs of workhouse infirmaries in regard to the nursing of the sick and the training of nurses. As many thousands of those who are dealt with by the poor law authorities are to be found in the wards of our workhouse infirmaries, and as their efficient care is a matter of great importance, this defect in the constitution of the Commission is much to be regretted.

At the present time it is important for nurses with a thorough knowledge of the work in poor law infirmaries, of present deficiencies, and of future possibilities, to offer evidence concerning the necessary points with the object of making clear to the Commission such reforms as are necessary to make the care of the sick thoroughly efficient and Poor Law work popular amongst nurses.

One thing is certain, that wherever a

Poor Law Institution undertakes the care of sick or helpless persons a thoroughly competent nurse should be employed. This is not the case in many of the small workhouses, and consequently such patients, including the epileptic and insane, may be placed in charge of untrained or partially trained attendants. The question of the best methods of nursing organisation in the smaller workhouses is certainly one which should be forcibly presented to the Royal Commission as demanding attention. One of the points which we hope will be presented for their consideration is the desirability of appointing trained nurses as Matrons in the workhouses where the infirmary wards form part of the general building, not to do the nurses' work but to supervise it. It is time for such Matrons to be appointed on their own qualifications, not because they are the wives of Masters.

We are apt to censure others for things which they have left undone instead of taking our own share of the blame. It is not altogether surprising that the need for the appointment of a trained nurse on the Commission escaped the notice of the late Premier, if his attention was not directed to it, and we have heard of no such action being taken on the part of trained Matrons of Poor Law Infirmaries.

Had these Matrons organised, and respectfully petitioned Mr. Balfour to appoint a trained nurse on the Commission they might have met with success similar to that which attended the efforts of Women's Societies in respect to the inclusion of women on the Commission. Nursing so closely touches many general questions that it behoves those holding responsible positions to study public affairs, so that they may not miss points of importance affecting the welfare of the sick,

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