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EDITORIAL.

OUTSIDE THE PALE—LONDON HOSPITAL NURSES.

The following instructive discussion took place in the House of Commons on July 4th:—

Major Chapple asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether his attention had been called to the existence of a system of farming out of nurses in the London Hospital under which nurses were taken from their training in the wards at the end of their second year, were paid 13s. per week, and sent out to nurse as trained nurses in private cases at £2 2s. per week, the hospital profiting by this means to the extent of over £6,000 per year before the war; and whether he intended to introduce legislation to protect nurses and patients from this system.

Mr. Walsh, Parliamentary Secretary to the Local Government Board, who replied, said:—The arrangements made by the London Hospital with their nurses are not a matter over which the Government have any control. There is no intention of introducing legislation on the subject.

Sir C. Henry: Has the hon. member satisfied himself of the accuracy of the statements in the question?

Captain Carr-Gomm: Are not the statements in the question of a controversial character, and is not the expression "farming out," though perhaps picturesque, very unfair to an institution which has done much good work for a great number of years?

Major Chapple: Is my hon. friend not aware that the London Hospital is the only great hospital which takes its nurses from their training in the wards at the end of the second year, and admittedly pays them

only 13s. a week while it draws two guineas a week?

The Speaker: This question should not have appeared on the paper. No Government Department has any control over the affairs of the London Hospital. If my attention had been called to the preamble of the question I should have struck it out.

We are all conversant with the commercialism of the Nursing Department of the London Hospital. No doubt it will pass with the present Prussianised incarnation, but what is of vast importance to the nursing profession, as a whole, is the unblushing confession of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Local Government Board that arrangements made by employers of voluntary charitable institutions, in connection with workers under their control, no matter how injurious they may be, are beyond the power of Parliament. Again, the Speaker, in supporting this view, boldly said had his attention been called to the preamble of the question he would have struck it out!

In our opinion this is a most indefensible attitude for Parliament to assume in relation to any class of worker. Here we have a class of women whose work in civilian and military hospitals, and in the homes of rich and poor is of the utmost value to the well-being of the State, and we find members of Parliament—to whose emoluments many of these workers are compelled to subscribe, calmly repudiating all responsibility for their conditions of labour. By what right, human or divine, are hospital governors empowered to treat their nursing staffs as helots, to work them and exploit them as they please? We are not living in pre-Reformation days when the religious houses were barred and bolted, and their conduct above the control of the State, and that is

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)