

CONTROL OF NURSES.

The Association of Poor Law Unions (a federation of Poor Law Guardians) will hold its twentieth annual meeting in London, on November 21st and 22nd, and will, of course, discuss the burning question of a Ministry of Health. In this connection the *Poor Law Officers' Journal* states, under the heading of "Control of Nursing":—

Another question connected with the Ministry of Health in regard to which there can be no difference of opinion is raised in the report on a resolution forwarded by the Chichester Board of Guardians. The Guardians, "in view of the proposal to institute a Ministry of Health, which will tend to create a demand for additional nurses, and in view of the action of the College of Nursing and the Central Committee of State Registration, which will tend to diminish the supply of nurses, asked the Association to petition the Local Government Board to institute a Register of Nurses to be subject to such curriculum, training and examination as may be prescribed, and which will be applicable to all Poor-Law Infirmaries where nurses are trained at present or where superintendent nurses are engaged." Many months ago, when the College of Nursing first proposed to acquire powers for the Control of Nurses and Nursing, we contended here that a proper method would place this public matter in the charge—as a central authority—of the Local Government Board which, as a Government Department, is the Ministry of Health. Any further development of central authority in the direct establishment of a Ministry will strengthen the argument in favour of such a system of control, nursing being an indispensable adjunct to the treatment of sickness for the purposes of restoration to health. A Ministry of Health could not divest itself of the central control of nursing. Concurrently, the Ministry would or ought to work locally through the several Local Authorities which provide nursing as a part of the whole organization of public health. A wise disposition of Local Authority would, as regards the poor or necessitous, allot this to the Assistance Authorities—the Guardians of the Poor. These contingencies appear to be so logical in their consecutive application to local public duty that we ought not to look farther for a new plan. Unfortunately, however, it is not the simple and direct method which always finds most favour.

We venture to think that there is a very widespread difference of opinion on this resolution—we take the strongest exception to the suggestion that a Ministry of Health should "control" the whole Nursing Profession—and then delegate its powers to lay Assistance Authorities—the Guardians of the Poor!—or that Nurses trained in Poor Law Infirmaries should be registered as a class apart. Trained Nurses have at last got the bit between their teeth, so far as "control" is concerned—and they intend to push forward in Parliament (now that many are enfranchised citizens) for a Bill to "control" themselves. That one of the first duties of a Ministry of Health will be to organize a State Service of Nursing for the poor there is little doubt; but no State Department has a right to deprive the Nursing Profession as a whole of self-determination. Thousands of nurses will not be employed by a

Ministry of Health—which will be in no way responsible for nurses it does not pay.

We have just won political liberty, and we must remember that liberty is the development of the personality along moral lines towards moral ideals, the setting free, in each individual and throughout the State, of a greater flood of creative energy.

Our Nurses' Registration Bill provides an outlet for this great flood. Any such suggestion as that to which we have alluded dams it at its source.

OUTSIDE THE GATES.

We are to have a General Election, and, of course, there are very diverse opinions on its necessity and efficacy. Parliament is to be prorogued this week; on November 25th the proclamation summoning a new Parliament will be read; December 4th is Nomination Day, December 14th Polling Day, the votes will be counted from December 21st to 28th, and according to the Coalition if their candidates are returned we shall be happy ever after! We wonder.

The truth is that the Coalition of both the old Parties, by which arrangement they have agreed to divide power, will practically disfranchise many ardent women voters, as, of course, progressives will not trouble to vote for the one reactionary candidate, and vice versa. The irony of fate—after their monumental efforts to wring the power from Parliament to support their political convictions.

A few women candidates have been nominated by various Parties for Parliamentary honours. It will be interesting to see what support they get from their own sex. We hope they will be loyally supported, and their right to help to make laws to which women have to conform will be vindicated at the polls.

A WORD FOR THE WEEK.

Marshal Foch, in a speech at British Headquarters on Sunday, said that it was, above all, the hammer-blows of the British Armies that were the decisive factors in the great and final defeat of the enemy.

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"JOAN AND PETER."*

When Mr. Wells starts out to discuss a subject, he at least does it thoroughly; one must anyhow admit that, even if one does not agree with him. He calls the story of Joan and Peter a story of an education—and it begins with Peter's birth—before Joan's—ends with their marriage, and they are being educated all the time; at least Peter is, and Joan so soon as we

* Cassell & Co. London.

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