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Editorial.

ELECTION OR SELECTION.

An important point was discussed at the meeting of the Bangor (N. Wales) City Council last week, namely, whether the Matron of its Borough Infectious Hospital should appoint the Assistant Nurses, or whether the Council should retain this power in its own hands.

The Matron claimed that by a resolution passed on her appointment by the Council this right was vested in her. The Sanitary Committee, which controls the hospital, while empowering the Matron to advertise for nurses and receive applications, has recently reserved the right of opening applications and making appointments. This the Matron interprets as a want of confidence in herself, and stated that in all hospitals, some workhouse infirmaries excepted, the power of engaging and dismissing nurses was vested in the Matron, "subject, of course, to the approval of the Committee." Unless the Matron held this power she could not exercise the necessary authority over the staff. If the Council refused her this power she would be compelled to relinquish her post. In reply to this two members of the Sanitary Committee wrote to the Matron pointing out that it was a question of considerable importance whether officials were appointed by the elected representatives of the ratepayers or by officers who were not responsible to this electorate.

Dr. Rowland Jones warmly supported the Matron's claim, and said that every medical man in the city did the same.

The Council decided to retain the power of election in its own hands, but passed a resolution expressing the hope that this decision would not interfere with the cordial relations which had hitherto existed between the Council and the Matron.

The decision of the Council is unquestionably the right one. As the body responsible to the ratepayers, all officers selected should be officially appointed by it. At the same time, in the Matron of the hospital the Council has an expert officer who is conversant with the needs of the institution, and can judge of the qualifications of candidates for posts as nurses in a way quite impossible for members of a lay Body. The procedure, in our view, should be that the *selection* of candidates should be left entirely in the hands of the Matron, she should investigate their qualifications and testimonials and should then recommend to the Council for appointment such candidates as she considers suitable, when, if approved, their formal *election* should take place. This arrangement is, we believe, the best one.

Again, in the matter of dismissal, the Council should delegate this power to no one, but the Matron should have power of suspension, and here again the Council will be wise to give great weight to the expert advice of its head nursing officer.

We believe that this is the method which has been found to work most satisfactorily in the majority of nurse-training schools, and to be just to all concerned. It must be remembered that the Matrons of such schools have their welfare and progress closely at heart, and that if at any time a Matron recommends the dismissal of a nurse it is because she feels such a course is in the interests of the institution. But her reasons should be laid before the Board of Governors and the nurse given an opportunity of stating her case if she desires to do so. However complete the confidence reposed in a paid official may be, it is a mistake to invest her with autocratic powers, or to delegate powers which should be retained by the Governing Body.

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