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Editorial.

ADEQUATE EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS.

An attempt is being made to obscure the real issue in connection with the much-criticised appointment to the Matronship of St. Bartholomew's Hospital on the ground that the appointment is resented because the selected candidate is an anti-registrationist.

The shibboleth of registration does not affect the question at issue, except on the wide ground for which registration stands—adequate educational standards, for the many as well as the few; for liberty of conscience on professional matters, and the right to act according to its dictates; for all that liberality of view on nursing matters which results from professional knowledge, wise judgment, and a just and wide outlook. This liberty of conscience has always been conceded to the nurses at St. Bartholomew's Hospital under the rule of the late Matron, who, while guiding and inspiring them both by precept and practice, always studiously refrained from undue influence and avoided the slightest attempt at coercion. Her mode of teaching in relation to the duty of nurses to their profession at large was to place before them what she believed to be right, and then to invite them to study the question for themselves and form their own conclusions. By this method St. Bartholomew's nurses have developed on self-reliant, broad-minded lines, and the traditions of their school have made them very tenacious of their liberty of conscience and of their right to act in accordance with its dictation.

To what purpose have they used their liberty? For no selfish end, but to endeavour to secure throughout the nursing world, for the benefit of the sick public, the

same high standards which they themselves practise and have learnt to regard as essential. Surely the Governors have reason to be proud that their nursing staff are in the van of progress in connection with the maintenance of high ideals and high standards for the profession at large. Nothing could redound more greatly to their credit, nothing could be a greater guarantee to the Governors that the nursing of St. Bartholomew's Hospital must be—as the medical staff have assured the Treasurer that it is—of an unusually high standard. This excellence has been attained because the individual members of the nursing staff are inspired by a high sense of professional duty, and realise individually their responsibility as members of a corporate profession to do their share in keeping its practice at a high level.

There is all the difference in the world between such loyal, intelligent service and that which depends for its efficiency on an autocratic government—the form which finds favour at the London Hospital—where the Matron has the power of dismissal of the nursing staff, subject to an appeal to the House Committee, an appeal which is futile because, as a matter of discipline, the House Committee could not reinstate a probationer already dismissed by the Matron.

The application of the methods of government employed in the London Hospital, in relation to its nursing school, to the nursing staff at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, would be a complete reversal of the great principles to which we have alluded, and upon which we maintain the success of the Nursing School at St. Bartholomew's has been based. There is no doubt, therefore, in our mind that the new departure, if persisted in, would be most prejudicial to the welfare of that historic hospital.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)