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EDITORIAL.

THE USE OF INSPECTION.

The President of the Local Government Board, Mr. John Burns, who accompanied the Prime Minister when he recently received a deputation from the Central Committee for State Registration of Nurses, has given various indications that he is not in sympathy with the demand of trained nurses for the legal organization of their profession.

Nevertheless, in no branch of nursing are the ill-effects of the present disorganization more apparent than in Poor Law nursing controlled by the Department over which he presides. In some Metropolitan and large provincial infirmaries a high standard of nursing is attained, but in many of the smaller institutions the standard is so deficient as to cause much unnecessary suffering to the sick poor, and this frequently, not from any ill will on the part of the nurses employed there, but because they do not receive adequate instruction in the performance of their duties, and the number of patients allotted to each nurse is so excessive, that it is quite impossible for them to receive proper nursing attentions.

We should have supposed that a Labour President of the Local Government Board would, before all things, have been desirous to see nursing systematized, so that the sick poor, for whose welfare he is responsible, should be carefully and tenderly nursed, and would recognize that the prestige of a State-recognized Service would attract to its ranks many desirable candidates. Yet Mr. Burns recently informed Dr. Chapple, in reply to a question which he asked in the House of Commons that the shortage of nurses was beyond his control and "due to the National Insurance Act, the demand for nurses in Sanatoria, and the large increase

in the number of nursing homes and similar institutions." This may be a diplomatic official reply, but it does not represent the facts of the case.

The dearth of nurses in many of the smaller infirmaries is due to the over-work and underpay of voteless women who can bring no direct pressure to bear to alter their conditions.

We print in another column a report by Miss Wamsley, one of the inspectors under the L.G.B., concerning the sick wards and nursery of the Newmarket Union Workhouse, and congratulate Miss Wamsley on this courageous and useful document. We hope Mr. Burns will realize from the report of one of his own inspectors, that it is not well with nursing under the Local Government Board, for indeed this report takes us back to the time of Bumble—52 patients on day duty, and 104 on night duty, fall to the share of one nurse including many acute and helpless cases. Sloughing bedsores are hardly to be wondered at under the circumstances, or the utilization of pauper help.

Does the President of the Local Government Board seriously think that the shortage of well educated and desirable nurses will cease while the conditions in the sick wards of not one but many workhouses are as described?

Sister Agnes Karll, reporting to the International Congress of Nurses at Cologne on the results of State Registration for Nurses in Germany, said "that a superior type of woman has turned to the nursing profession since the introduction of State regulation is doubtless explained by the greater readiness of fathers to permit their daughters to enter a calling which is dignified by State sanction."

We commend this statement to the attention of the President of the Local Government Board.

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