

THE ANTI-REGISTRATION UKASE AT BART.'S.

The question of who is guilty of the tyrannous act of depriving the Nursing Staff at St. Bartholomew's Hospital of liberty of speech and conscience concerning their own professional affairs, has agitated the powers that be at that institution during the past week. That someone has played the tyrant is not denied; the nurses for the future are not to be permitted to discuss their own Registration Bill, which proposes legislation vitally affecting their whole life's work—educational, economic, and social—in relation to the body politic; and a Resolution to this effect has been inscribed upon the minutes. It is a monstrous pronouncement by those in authority in any public institution dependent upon the financial support of the public.

The Committee, however, have done the right thing in taking the blame for their ungenerous action upon themselves, as, of course, without their support the officials cannot enforce their anti-registration policy upon their subordinates.

We are informed that on Thursday last week the Committee called a meeting of the Sisters, and that Mr. Acton Davis, the member who represents it on the anti-registration body, the Central Hospital Council for London, told them that when the Matron reported the request made by one of the Sisters that a meeting should be held on State Registration in the Nurses' Sitting-room in the Home, that they discussed the subject, and deliberately came to the unanimous decision that the request should be refused. Mr. Acton Davis laid great emphasis on the fact that the Committee, and the Committee alone, were responsible for the decision.

As will be seen from a letter in our columns, the Sister of the Paying Probationers' Home considers it unjust to hold the Matron, in spite of her anti-registration views, responsible for the *volte face* of the Committee of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, on their past honourable policy of permitting free speech to the Nursing Staff. We think, however, it would be exceedingly futile to attempt to exonerate either the Committee or their senior officials from blame. All in their own degree are equally blameworthy. They can in no measure exonerate one another, as their policy is synonymous.

When invited to concede a privilege for which there was a precedent of a quarter of a century, because the Matron considers protection for nurses and the public through

State organization "absolutely unnecessary," she did not accede to the Sister's request, and, as we now learn from Mr. Acton Davis, when this question of personal liberty was brought before the Committee, they unanimously, and without consulting the Nursing Staff, decided to refuse to them their inalienable right, as responsible working women, to discuss their own professional affairs, and to take action thereon.

Owing to her anti-registration prejudices, we conclude that the Matron did not, as her predecessor would have done, urge the views of the Nursing Staff, who have on several occasions in the past voted for the organization of their profession by the State. Without protest she was apparently content that they should suffer the affront she was empowered to convey to them.

Had it not been for the justifiable indignation of those nurses trained in the hospital who decline to permit this wrong to be done in secret, it would never have come to the knowledge of the public.

The resolution to be submitted to the members of the Society for the State Registration of Nurses, on Thursday, will claim liberty of conscience and speech for women workers in charitable institutions on all questions of legislation affecting their profession, and will invite the Committee of St. Bartholomew's Hospital to rescind the resolution placed on the minutes, depriving the Nursing Staff of the free exercise of conscience. This question has become one of public morality.

We beg to thank all those women who, loving justice, have during the past week so generously responded to our appeal for funds.

FREE CHOICE OF DOCTOR.

In last week's Journal it was explained to nurses who were insured persons under the Act that if they wished to obtain medical benefit that they had to go to the nearest Post Office, choose their doctor from the panel list, and take him their pink card to be filled up. This advice is satisfactory as far as it goes; it is satisfactory if the nurse's own doctor happens to be on the list, but if he is not, she may be puzzled to know how to proceed.

Everyone wishes to retain the service of the doctor in whom she has confidence and to whom she is accustomed, and should by no means allow herself to be compelled, and coerced, by an Insurance Committee to go to a doctor on the panel if he is not the doctor of her choice, when there is a special section in the Act which has been inserted by Parliament to protect her.

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