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EDITORIAL.

"WE SIMPLY CANNOT GET THEM."

At the recent annual meeting of the Society for State Registration of Nurses, Sir Victor Horsley suggested that a deputation should wait upon Mr. Burns, the President of the Local Government Board, respecting the shortage of Poor Law Nurses, and to judge from the distressing condition of the sick in many infirmaries owing to the shortage, and the resulting inferior quality of the nursing, it is high time indeed that the President should grapple with this important question, and cease opposing the better organization of the profession of nursing through State Registration.

Some time ago the Matron of the Lambeth Infirmary asked for an additional 20 nurses owing to the overstrain of the insufficient staff. This number, we believe, was not granted at the time, and, now that the Local Government Board is willing to sanction the employment of the necessary number of nurses, the Matron has reported to the Guardians that she is experiencing difficulty in obtaining the required number. As a consequence a scheme to inaugurate a working day of 8½ hours for the nurses cannot be put into force. Matrons of other well ordered London Poor Law Infirmaries have the same sad tale to tell.

"We simply cannot get them," was the statement made by the Chairman of the Lincoln Board of Guardians at a recent meeting. The Nursing Committee of the Infirmary consider the position very serious, and one lady guardian remarked that "they were giving seven guineas for temporary nurses and spending pounds on advertising and railway fares of applicants. In three weeks' time, as the Local Government Board had allowed probationary nurses, four new nurses would come in. It would be absolutely necessary for two charge nurses to be appointed to train them."

"We simply cannot get them," said the Chairman, and could give no advice.

Another Guardian remarked that they were only having the same difficulty that other Unions and other Hospitals had to contend with. It was all owing to the scarcity of nurses throughout the country.

Salaries have been raised without result, and one wonders how the poor patients fare under the circumstances. It is a very sad condition of affairs, and those who for twenty-five years have opposed the better organization of nursing by the State—better education, and an honourable status for trained nurses—are responsible for the present disastrous disorganization of the work, and the suffering of sick people, too poor to help themselves. The opposition of interested and autocratic hospital officials, and of dogmatic ill-advised Ministers to the State Registration of Nurses, which as Sir Victor Horsley pointed out "has been brought to bear secretly against one of the most humane pieces of legislation ever initiated," has now become so scandalous that some very effective means must be taken to acquaint the public with the truth, and advise them to insist upon the protection of both the sick, and their nurses, by granting such conditions and status to the Nursing Profession as will encourage high minded well educated women to make nursing their life's work, and thus secure their skilled services for all who so sorely need them.

We commend to notice the experience of Miss Maclean, Registrar of Nurses in New Zealand that "thoughtful women of education in choosing a career, are more likely to allow their choice to follow inclination, and adopt a nurse's work when that has also legal recognition," and Sister Agnes Karll's report that in Germany "the introduction of a State examination has been of salutary effect on both the quantity and quality of applicants in nursing."

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