EDITORIAL.

THE MEMORIAL TO THE PRIME MINISTER.

The Bill in charge of Dr. Chapple, M.P., in the House of Commons, " to Regulate the Qualifications of Trained Nurses and to Provide for their Registration," is one which has a strong claim on the consideration of Parliament, and the reasons have been embodied in a Memorial to the Prime Minister, presented by Dr. Chapple this week, on behalf of the Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses, which we print on page 29, and which is supported by a Petition which has been signed by upwards of 500 Matrons and Superintendents of Nurses.

The case presented that legislation is urgently required could scarcely be stronger. The Memorial comes not from individuals, or even from one society, but represents the considered opinion of the organized medical practitioners and nurses throughout the Kingdom, members of eight influential national societies having diverse objects, but all united in the Central Committee in supporting the principle of State Registration of Trained Nurses, and agreed as to the methods by which it shall be carried out. These have been incorporated in the Nurses' Registration Bill, every clause of which has been carefully debated, considered, and finally adopted.

A Nurses' Registration Bill has been before the House of Commons for the past ten years, read a first time, and then, because the antiquated procedure of the People's House permits one man to thwart the people's will, it has never reached a second reading. Though its supporters have always known that a large majority, composed of all Parties in the House, was in favour of the Bill, that majority has until this year never been tested. Dr. Chapple, therefore, is greatly to be congratulated on devising a policy by means of which the feeling of the House of Commons could be recorded, and on having secured, on the first reading of the Bill on March 3rd, the triumphant majority of 228.

The case set forth by the memorialists is that legislation is urgently required in the interests of the whole system of voluntary and municipal hospitals, and also of the public, who largely employ trained nurses; that there is at the present time no definite standard of training for hospital nurses, that while State Registration will not prejudice the economic position of women who are engaged in nursing but do not pretend to be trained, one of its chief objects is to prevent untrained and partly trained women from representing themselves to the public as fully trained nurses, and that at present the public pay for what they do not receive when health and even life may be at stake; that owing to the lack of status many women, among them those best qualified, are deterred from entering the nursing profession in 'England, and that, in consequence, the supply of trained nurses is insufficient to meet the increasing demand. The memorialists believe that State Registration will, by defining and safeguarding the status of trained nurses, lessen the reluctance of women to adopt nursing as a career, and they petition His Majesty's Government to afford the necessary facilities for the consideration of the Bill on its merits, so that, if approved by the Legislature, it may be passed into law during the present Session.

In our opinion it is the clear duty of the Government to grant this Petition. It is now nine years since a Select Committee of the House of Commons unanimously reported to Parliament that " it is desirable that a Register of Nurses should be kept by a Central Body appointed by the State." The House of Lords in 1908 passed Lord Ampthill's Bill without a division having been taken at any stage, thus demonstrating their adhesion to the principle of Nurses' Registration, and the House of Commons, by an almost unprecedented majority, has also expressed its support. A Liberal Government cannot consistently with Liberal principles allow a few members to stultify reform which both Houses of Parliament have clearly demonstrated is, in their opinion, necessary.