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EDITORIAL.

FORCE A COUNCIL UPON THE NURSES.

You cannot get an agreement, but you may get a Council forced upon them which will carry the confidence of Nurses after the first sore feelings have passed off.—*Viscount Knutsford in the House of Lords.*

Thus the hospital autocrat when legislating for a body of women workers. Supreme in his own domain, where he is securely entrenched behind the ramparts of feudalism, he imagines that he can force his despotic will upon a great profession of women, working outside hospital walls, as he can inside, and that when the first sore feelings have passed away they will acquiesce in his dictation, just as he doubtless imagines that the nurses of St. Bartholomew's Hospital have ceased to resent his forcing upon them as head of their training school a Matron's Assistant whose two years' certificate at the London Hospital did not qualify her to be a staff nurse at St. Bartholomew's Hospital; the loss of prestige of that nursing school has been demonstrated by the fact that not one first-class appointment has been obtained by the nursing staff at St. Bartholomew's for the last nine years.

But it is incredible, in the twentieth century, that even the most reactionary hospital chairman (so far as nurses are concerned) should give such advice to his peers in the House of Lords, and only proves the contempt of the average philanthropist for the woman worker. The present absolute and uncontrolled authority of the Committees of the voluntary hospitals is one of the factors which sooner or later will bring them under the control of the State. In the State Hospitals—such as those of the Metropolitan Asylums Board—Matrons and nurses have much greater professional liberty and freedom of action than under the voluntary

hospitals, and the spirit of the age is against unlimited control of one human being by another.

If there were a vital point at issue in any great trade or profession of men the State would give serious attention to the complication, and the Prime Minister, either personally or by deputy, would probably endeavour to reconcile conflicting interests. A member of the Upper House who had the hardihood to advise that it should force an unpalatable Governing Body upon any class of men would have the whole labour world to reckon with. But because the workers are women, the Chairman of the London Hospital and those associated with him treat them with contempt.

In Lord Goschen's Nurses' Registration Bill (promoted by the College of Nursing, Ltd.), which Lord Knutsford supported on its Second Reading in the House of Lords, not one seat is secured to nurses on the Governing Body.

The Earl of Mayo pointed out in the course of the Debate that what nurses want on the Council are not "persons" to represent them; they want personal representation themselves. "That," he said, "is the point which they make above all things, and I think that that matter should be considered by this House, and very seriously considered."

That is a point on which those who have for so long been working to obtain the State Registration of Trained Nurses have rightly insisted, and it is one which has been bitterly contested by those who desire to keep them in subjection.

So far public-spirited nurses have conducted their campaign for the organization of their work by the State with admirable dignity and self-restraint, but it is not presumable that enfranchised British citizens will endure for any length of time the gratuitous insults and domination of men of the type of Lord Knutsford.

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