

shows. The writer also points out the necessity for greater cleanliness on the part of Medical men and Nurses in French Hospitals; and therein, I firmly believe, he strikes the nail on the head, for I shall never forget the impressions of general dirt, discomfort, and disorder, conveyed to my mind by more than one Continental Hospital I have visited. The letter is as follows:—

* * *

“THE question of the laicisation of the Nurses of the French Hospitals continues to exercise the minds of the Surgeons, and especially of the politicians, of France. M. Deprés, who is, however, usually somewhat reactionary in his scientific views, has for some time constituted himself the defender of the old system of Nursing by ‘sœurs de charité,’ and has commenced a campaign against the Trained Lay Nurses, who, except in the Hôtel Dieu, the Hôpital de St. Louis, and certain other places where the founders have by will otherwise decreed, are now everywhere in Paris superseding the nuns. M. Deprés alleges that, in his Hospital service, the mortality before the Sisters left was only 1 per cent., but that since it has risen to 5 per cent.”

* * *

“THESE statistics, however, require a good deal of revision. The Nurses, he says, now are the dregs of the bars or of domestic service. The mortality of the French Hospitals in 1845 he puts at 2 in 27, and now at 2 in 22. He admits that in the Lying-in Wards, the mortality was 1 in 35, and that it is now only 1 in 104; but this eccentric gentleman does not admit that this is due to greater cleanliness and antiseptic precautions, but ascribes it to the alleged fact that, nowadays, a much more respectable and well nourished class of women are not ashamed to abuse the hospitality of the Hospitals, and that hence their mortality is necessarily less. He further charges the Lay Nurses with negligence and venality, and he promises to adduce instances. Obviously, if any of the newly-trained Nurses are venal, careless, or incompetent, this indicates insufficient training and imperfect selection and supervision.”

* * *

“THE experience of England, and of so many other countries, proves that these are not inevitable defects. The fact is, that the Nuns who had charge of the Paris Hospital Wards were never Nurses in the sense in which that title is now everywhere understood, and in the sense in which it has so long been interpreted in England. They were Ward managers, housekeepers, kind, and often even affectionate, superintendents, especially to patients who were devoted to their religious duties. But of the actual duties of Nursing and dressing, they had rarely even an elementary

notion; they were not instructed in them, nor did they pay the slightest efficient attention to the way in which they were carried out by the Ward attendants. These latter were very frequently equally unskilled, and of a very low order of morality and intelligence. They were often excessively venal, and in the highest degree negligent.”

* * *

“THERE are few students of the French Hospitals at all sympathetic or kind to the patients who have not found it desirable to give to some poor creature destitute of the means to bribe the attendants, a few *sous* for the purpose from time to time. The Nursing of the Paris Hospitals in past days was, in fact, a byword among nations. It is too much to hope that this will be remedied at a stroke. Had the French sisters of charity moved with the times, and established training schools, had they taken their part in the Nightingale movement in England, or the Deaconess system of Germany, they might now be in a better position before the world. As it is, they have still the opportunity to take the necessary steps to rival lay Nurses in efficiency in the Hospitals and asylums which remain to them in Paris and elsewhere in France. The Hospital mortality of Paris was, till recently, a reproach to all France; it would still be found far in excess of what it ought to be. This is in no small measure due to want of scientific cleanliness in Nurses (and Doctors). To establish a healthy rivalry in efficient, cleanly, and devoted Nursing between the lay and the religious Nursing bodies would be a great boon to the Hospital patients of Paris, and would redeem the city from the discredit into which its Hospitals fell some years since in the eyes of foreign visitors, and from which they have not yet wholly recovered. Meantime, M. Bourneville and his colleagues on the Municipal Council are warned that in M. Deprés they have a vigilant and unsparing critic, and no doubt the Training Institutions and the Hospital Nursing service over which they preside will benefit by the caution.”

* * *

A KIND correspondent sends me the following cutting from the perennial stream of correspondence which, for weeks past, has filled the columns of our widely-read contemporary, the *Daily Telegraph*, upon the marriage question. The only comment possible, it seems to me, upon the letter is, that Mrs. Bridges' “large circle of friends” includes “two men,” who are evidently in the most pitiable ignorance of the subject they discussed, and are most certainly, therefore, *not* “worth listening to” upon the question; and that Mrs. Bridges' own conclusions are most sensible and well founded, there is not the slightest doubt. I

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)