

we believe, is not conducive to the best interests of Nursing. The Wards of such a Hospital are supplied with women who do not intend to make Nursing their life-work—who, in fact, are many of them quite unfitted, by want of health or want of physical strength, to continue the arduous employment of Sick Nursing. And we say, without fear of contradiction, that it is far from being an unmixed benefit to any profession to have any large section of its members, mere *dilettanti*.

But to return to the point we proved at first. The number of workers for whom room can be found in a Hospital being strictly limited, every such paying Probationer, who is not intending to continue the occupation of Nursing, is preventing from obtaining the opportunity of acquiring the Art, some other woman, who might otherwise possess all the qualities necessary to make an excellent Nurse, useful to the community, and creditable to her profession.

But the system, we are led to believe, is in many other ways acting injuriously. It cannot be too strongly nor too frequently insisted upon, that the *raison d'être* of Hospitals—their first object and intention—is the care of the sick within their walls. The efficiency of the Medical or the Nursing School attached to the Institution is important, doubtless, but only secondarily to the interest of the patients. We maintain most strongly that the desire to make money from Students of either department is entirely foreign to the essential constitution of a Hospital, and therefore should be entirely subordinate and accessory. This, we believe, is incapable of argument; it must be admitted. But there is grave reason to fear that in several Institutions—one being pre-eminent over all others in this matter—this important principle has been completely lost sight of. We are informed, for example, that a very large number of ladies are being constantly admitted to these Hospitals for three months' "training" (!), for the payment of one guinea per week; that most of them at the termination of this period depart—some few to be more useful in their own homes and neighbourhoods, by reason of the small amount of technical knowledge they have obtained—many more to reappear as Private Nurses, "who have walked the Hospitals"—nearly all to believe that they are perfectly competent and efficient attendants upon the sick.

The injury thus wrought to well-trained women, who desire to earn their livelihood as Private Nurses, is incalculable; the opportunities it affords for deception of the public, and the consequent injury of the sick, are, we believe, impossible to estimate, but can be easily imagined. What we desire to point out is, that a most critical state of

affairs is arising in the Nursing world, by reason of this present popularity of the work; that if the present system continues unchecked, serious evil must result to the public, to Nursing, and to Nurses; and, finally, we will show what, in our judgment, is the most probable outcome of the present state of affairs, and how this can be secured so as to obtain the greatest possible amount of advantage, and the smallest possible detriment, to all classes concerned.

## A GUIDE TO MEDICAL AND SURGICAL NURSING.

BY RACHEL NORRIS.

### CHAPTER I.

THE question of the expediency of the employment of trained and educated women in the Nursing of the sick, whether in Hospitals, Workhouses, or their own homes, is so wide that I do not attempt here to enter upon it; but I think a few words of practical information from one who was herself a Hospital Nurse may be of use, not only to those who have already engaged in the service, but to some who have been led to contemplate the adoption of Nursing as a profession.

First of all, I would most earnestly entreat no woman to allow love of notoriety, false sentiment, or even a mere honest wish of earning her own livelihood, to influence her in her choice. I am sure that of all the means by which it is possible to gain daily bread, there is none more irksome, more trying, nay, more positively revolting, than the charge of the sick, if the Nurse have not that inborn love of the work which is given, alas! but to few. On the other hand, if it so happens that she have this love in addition to other necessary mental and physical qualities, no calling can be found which offers so happy a life, or where labour brings so quick or inevitable a reward, or which, in spite of many undeniable anxieties, secures such absolute peace of mind.

There are two classes whom those most interested in Nursing are anxious to attract into their service. Respectable persons of the rank from which upper servants are usually taken, and a smaller number of more highly educated women.

Women belonging to the first of these classes, after two or three years' training in a Hospital, during which time they receive a slight remuneration for their services, are eligible for employment as Workhouse or Private Nurses, or if they remain in Hospital service, for the position of Head or Staff Nurses, as it is technically called. Their salaries will average from £18 to £30 per annum, exclusive of uniform, and by-and-by it is

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)