

before visions of the Box and Cox procedure which would be necessitated in the bedroom arrangements—of the endless meals which, day and night, would be perpetually progressing—and of Nurses taking their daily exercise in the small hours of the morning. Considering that the accommodation for the Nursing Staff of a Hospital must necessarily be limited, and that the public already does not provide sufficient funds to maintain these Charities in complete efficiency, it appears to us to be absurd to lament the long hours of work which Nursing entails.

We heard a story once of a very Socialistic town, where it was agreed that no working-man should labour for more than eight hours in every twenty-four. Then the Doctors of that town, with great gravity, declared that they also would only work for eight hours *per diem*. And great was the wrath and the horror of the Socialists during the temporary continuance of the arrangement. So, while sickness continues in the land, will Nurses be obliged to do hard work, and for long hours. They have responsible and onerous duties, but they are shared with others; the routine and perfect regularity makes them easier to perform than the uninitiated would imagine possible; the interest of the conflict, in which they are active participants, adds a zest to their labours, which must be felt to be rightly understood.

We have spoken on this matter more than once, with no uncertain sound. On behalf of Nurses, we distinctly disclaim any approval of the sham sentiment which is now so commonly expressed about Nursing. Nurses know that theirs is a hard and even a dangerous occupation; but to them it has its unceasing attractions, as Medicine, the Army, and the Navy have for their separate devotees. Nurses do not want pity for their lot; as a class, they are very well satisfied with it. And in this connection we would inform our contemporary, that, at the present time, every Hospital in the United Kingdom is besieged by gentlewomen, of good birth and education, who are only desirous to enter its service and be trained as attendants upon the sick. For one such candidate ten years ago, there are now probably fifty. Will our contemporary explain that fact, and can it believe that such a state of affairs would be possible, if its picture of a Nurse's treatment in Hospitals were even approximately correct?

In the next place, our contemporary seems to imagine that these women, as a rule, enter Hospitals merely from "imaginative enthusiasm," and that this is aroused or stimulated by the "opposition of friends." It is entirely mistaken. Perhaps one candidate for Probationership out of a hundred is actuated by such ideas; but certainly less than one out of ten of such sentimental

women is likely to be successful in persuading a Matron to accept her services. Most Nurses have undertaken the work as a means of gaining an honourable position and a livelihood; a few, who need neither the one nor the other, because they desire some regular employment, or earnestly desire to do some good for their day and generation. They are all—as a class—proud of their profession, and would repudiate indignantly the idea that they would, if they could, abandon it, because of the hardships it entails.

Once more, we deny totally and altogether that Nurses "are expected to work night and day until the spring breaks and life is useless." We need not say more on this point, for such extravagance of language carries with it completely its own confutation. Passing by the remarks as to the culpable ignorance of Committees, the assumed tyranny of Matrons, the presumed idiotcy of Visiting Staffs, and the particular way in which the House Surgeon's head is "screwed on," we come to our contemporary's description of a Nurse's life and duties. We consider the graphic account of these matters to be highly coloured; the fact that Nurses get some rest during the fourteen hours of duty, and some time for exercise and recreation, and some small creature comforts at meal times, is certainly not sufficiently noticed.

But to descend to particulars. The Nurses are said to "bear huge medicine baskets down to the dispensary"; to be hurried from supper to chapel, and from the latter "to bed in a large dormitory with the barest accommodation"; to be "subjected to many insults, obliged to hear oaths and coarse language." Now, these are definite statements. We have, in a somewhat wide experience, been led to believe that, in most Hospitals, the medicine baskets are not huge, and are always conveyed either by a lift or by porters; and that supper, at any rate, was an undisturbed meal; and that any patient who insulted a Nurse, or used oaths or coarse language, would rapidly be transferred outside the Hospital walls.

But our contemporary definitely makes these assertions. We call upon it, therefore, to quote chapter and verse, to give the names of the Hospitals where Nurses are thus made to work and to suffer. If it proves its point we shall thank it, in the name of Nurses, for its exposure of such a system, and we will aid it to the utmost of our power in its efforts at reform. But we repeat that we know that our contemporary is entirely wrong, in making such charges against all Hospitals; in believing that Nurses are sorry for themselves, and either desire or deserve compassion for their calling; and in asserting that there is anything in the faintest degree approaching a general system of White Slavery in Hospitals.

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