

institute an earnest search for it, the better for our advancement professionally, and also for that indefinable "something," *public opinion*.

Alas! I am afraid that I do not share those valiant sentiments expressed recently by Miss Thomson, in that thoughtfully written paper of hers on Private Nursing—viz., "I am not without hope that the spread of knowledge of what skilled nursing really is amongst the better classes may lead to a great amelioration of our lot in future." Our amelioration will, if I mistake not, have to come from *within* our ranks, not from *without* them. All we want is united effort and an earnest will, and we can, I feel sure, do this work for ourselves far better and more thoroughly than it could be done by any extern agency. Only let us be careful not to mistake enthusiasm for real and properly consecrated earnestness. For although I have the greatest faith in man, and believe that under proper training man would rise, "to elevate him we must tell him plainly what he is capable of, and that he cannot put on to another his glorious and terrible responsibility." But who will "bell the cat"? My brother, my sister, let me beseech you to

"Rise from your dreams of the future—
Of gaining some hard-fought field,
Of storming some airy fortress,
Of bidding some giant yield;
Your future has deeds of glory,
Of honour (God grant it may!),
But your arm will never be stronger,
Or the need so great as to-day.

Rise! if the past detains you,
Her sunshine and storms forget;
No chains so unworthy to hold you
As those of a vain regret;
Sad or bright, she is lifeless ever,
Cast her phantom arms away,
Nor look back, save to learn the lesson
Of a nobler strife to-day."

♫ Talmage says, "At Hawarden Mr. Gladstone, while showing me his trees during a prolonged walk through his magnificent park, pointed out a sycamore, and with a wave of the hand said, 'In your visit to the Holy Land, did you see any sycamore more impressive than that?' I confessed that I had not. Its branches were not more remarkable than its roots. It was to such a tree as that Jesus pointed when He would illustrate the power of faith. 'Ye might say unto this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou cast into the sea, and it would obey you.' One reason why Christ fascinated the world as no other teacher is because instead of using severe arguments He was always telling how something in the spiritual world was like unto something in the natural world. Oh, those wonderful likes of our Lord! Like a grain of mustard seed. Like a treasure hid in a field. Like a merchant seeking goodly pearls. Like a net cast into the sea. Like unto a householder."

"What is truth?" queried Pilate of old. Are not men asking the self-same question to-day? Quite true. And it occurs to me that that "Just Man," the world's Redeemer, is now on His trial in our infant profession, and by our demeanour before the truth without, the world will know our attitude before the truth within. May we rise to the dignity of our glorious and terrible responsibility!

Nature, be it remembered, *will* be reported. All things are engaged in writing its history. The planet, the pebble, goes attended by its shadow. The rolling rock leaves its scratches on the mountain, the river its channels in the soil, the animal its bones in the stratum, the fern and leaf their modest epitaph in the coal. The fallen drop makes its sculpture in the sand stone; not a footprint in the snow, or along the ground, but footprints its characters more or less lasting a map of its march; and every act of our lives inscribes itself in the memories of our fellows, and in our own faces. The air is full of sounds, the sky of tokens; the ground has memoranda and signatures, and every object is covered with hints, which speak to the intelligent. So doubtless the

following proposition will be admitted without further argument by every intelligent and thinking mind—viz., that in these days cheap philanthropy and "sweating systems" are rising and flourishing on every hand; and the hard-working Nursing profession is no exception to the rule. But let me give you a case or two in point. Running over to the quarters of yonder solitary District Nurse on one of those busy days of hers, we catch her just coming in from a heavy morning's round. She is sitting down to dinner. The rattle of the door knocker is heard. Doctor's messages, parson's messages, and district visitors pour in until four o'clock; for this is a district within a radius of five miles round. And for obvious reasons, by far the most expeditious and expedient way out of the difficulty is, in each case, to transfer as quickly as possible each problem as it arises to the local District Nurse, with the usual injunction, "You will go to-day, Nurse." Now what strikes us most, as we review the whole affair, is that *not one* visitor apologises for keeping the Nurse from her dinner, nor evinces the remotest shadow of the feelings of humanity; that is, so far as the Nurse herself is concerned.

Take another solitary case. This time we arrive as the duties of the busy day are done. An envelope is lying upon the table. The Nurse opens it; finds a message from some "interested" member of the committee to this effect: "A clergyman's wife at a distance has found a case of sickness untended, and wants a Nurse for the night." And as these two are cases selected from a many that have come under my notice, drawn from real life, may I ask you, Sir, what we have, as a profession, to expect from such quarters, and also what amount of work constitutes "a fair day's work for a fair day's pay"? I repeat, we must be resolved to see things as they are, as my object in calling your attention to these cases is not denunciation primarily, but rather to point out the existing and glowing need of "evolution" in our profession; in other words, a *division* of labour in our work.

Again, "in the case of some of those District Nurses," observes our friend "Vigilant," "just as the most arduous and struggling period has passed by, the quiet, the plodding, and painstaking worker is being cruelly ejected out of her appointment, instead of being permitted to carry the palm so dearly won, and all unawares suddenly finds herself left starving, supplanted by some other Nurse of greater pretensions." But then, as Fielding observes, "To deny a man the preferment he merits, and to give it to another man who doth not merit it, is a manifest act of injustice, and is consequently inconsistent with both honour and honesty. Nor is it only an injustice to the man himself, but to the public, for whose good principally all public offices are, or ought to be, instituted. This good can never be completed, nor obtained, but by employing all persons according to their capacity. Wherever true merit is liable to be superseded by favour and partiality, and men are entrusted with offices without any regard to capacity and integrity, the affairs of that state or town will be *always* in a deplorable condition." These Nursing Institutions are *not* flourishing; but why, Sir, should such results be laid to our charge?

Further, established ills, I would remind you, are always borne with patience—a marvellous and terrible patience—till human endurance can do no more. "And," observes some pithy writer, "when terrible cruelties are practised in the name of morality and respectability, it is high time to cry out. Nobody takes upon himself the task of attacking chartered evils as a pastime, or as an occupation for elegant leisure; the attack is delayed till long after the need for it has arisen. It ought to be recognised, then, that the protest—however mistaken may be the views of those who make it—implies beneath the surface of society a mass of silent suffering—suffering as pathetic and as maddening to witness as the anguish of dumb animals. But a wise partisan will turn even the heresies of enemies to account, by looking upon them as words of warning by which attention may be directed

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)