

## Professional Review.

### "SMASHING UP THE MATRONS."

A CORRESPONDENT has sent us a copy of this month's *Scalpel*, with the request, "Please deal with the opinions of this disgruntled Pro," marking an article entitled "Sketchy Interviews," and signed "Kathleen."

We have read this fictitious "Interview," and find it inspired by a more purposeful animus than is usually inspired in the average "disgruntled Pro" by hospital discipline, and the writer owns that the aim of the article is to give prominence "to my own diatribe," and "my own diatribe is a bitter attack upon the present powers exercised by Matrons in the performance of their duties in superintending the nursing department in hospitals.

The "Editor" said to "Kathleen," "Could you not interview one of the leaders in the nursing world and let me have some views on the training of nurses? You know there is a wide divergence of opinion on many nursing questions."

"Kathleen" asks for a few introductions, and amongst them receives one to the Matron of St. Agatha's; but "Kathleen" confides to her readers that "I did not care really about approaching the Matron of St. Agatha's. I could not forget the first time I saw her as she moved like Juno across the hospital quadrangle, her silks rustling while she bowed and smiled, like a veritable queen in her own domain, at some students (rather good looking) who took off their hats to her. There was an air of distinction about her, a very atmosphere of a very superior person, and I thought:

"Do the probationers ever approach her, this great personage?"

"Does she know anything about them, where they sleep, what they eat, how long they are on duty?"

Does she interest herself in the troubles and difficulties of the zoo women who are really under her?"

"Kathleen," who, presumably, premises because a hospital Matron has a "distinguished air" is becomingly attired, and is on courteous terms with the medical students, that she must necessarily be an unsympathetic fool, who is unacquainted with the hours on duty of the nursing staff she controls, suggests something of the kind to the Editor, who replies:—

"How can you expect her? You know she lives the higher life. She is on the Council of the Society for the Elevation of Women (the genus

Kathleen), she is President of the British Association for the Enfranchisement of Women (What will Mrs. Fawcett say to this?), Chairman of the Parliamentary Bills Committee of the Amalgamated Society of Women Workers (we hope she will bring our hereditary legislators to a sane frame of mind on London's Local Government), Corresponding Secretary of six different organizations for improving the condition of women's work (especially in relation to nurses and asylum attendants, who are "on duty" night and day, and those who work fourteen hours at a stretch, and the East End "slop workers," and "fur pullers," and the dippers of phosphoric matches, with their necrosed jaws, and the pottery "lead workers," with their toothless gums, and the dumb-driven countless thousands of half-starved drudges, who rise up early, and late take rest, to whom death comes as a blessed release by suicide, or murder, or exhaustion); she has to be interviewed hourly by doctors, sisters, nurses, by members of the Hospital Committees, by outsiders, and by lady visitors, so her time is so taken up that she has little leisure to attend to all the petty cares of hospital nursing life" (certainly not, and if the Matron is an efficient administrator she will depute the "petty cares" to efficient subordinates, as the Commander-in-Chief deposes duties to the leaders of his legions).

Before departing, "Kathleen" plaintively asks the "Editor":—

"What is the higher life?"

Concerning which this gentleman is evidently somewhat befogged. For he replies:—

"You can attend a Women's Conference and learn, or, better, take the *NURSING RECORD* (excellent advice), and you can learn to what nurses are so aiming and aspiring, and what all the leaders think."

So these two worthies part, and nothing daunted, "Kathleen" is "determined to complete her mission." So she obtains more letters of introduction to the Matron of the well-known hospital at St. Pancras-by-the-Sea, and as she is whisked away from town she "felt the smell of the new-mown hay . . . felt buoyant, hopeful," in spite of doubts of how she would be received, "remembering an introduction to a grand dame (another hospital matron), who wore a *pince-nez*, and rings on her fingers, and rings on her toes, and who tossed to one side my letter from Sir Henry Brompton, M.D., F.R.S., with all the contempt desirable, to impress one with her own importance. Obtaining a personal interview with this lady was difficult; two Sisters, with long robes, waited on her, as she was seated on a dais, and looked down on the intruders." However, "Kathleen"

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