

Undoubtedly, Sister Dora was, in many respects, a law unto herself—possessing a strong will and love of personal power which was fostered by circumstances. Hers was a grand but faulty character; unhappily, her copyists have seized on the least admirable traits and exaggerated these. This has been done even by a writer of distinction, Margaret L. Woods. "The Vagabonds," a work of considerable power and pathos, is disfigured, to my mind, by what amounts to a caricature of Sister Dora. The well-known incident of her interfering to save a patient's arm from amputation (a dangerous precedent though the result was successful) is utilised in the opening scene of the second volume.

"Sister Honoria" acts the part of Sister Dora, the only difference being that the injured limb is a leg instead of an arm. The surgeon condescends to argue with her, but finally yields, saying that he washes his hands of the responsibility, and the case is given over to her treatment, which proves "magnificently successful."

The character sketch of Sister Honoria throughout suggests the model. Her surpassing physical strength by which she separates easily two fighting women and sends the stronger combatant flying (the house surgeon, a mere man, having retired defeated from an attempt to do likewise), her despotic rule over the hospital and all within its gates, and lastly her lonely death, all recall Sister Dora, but the copy does not do justice to the original. A more extravagant parody entitled "In the Shadow of Guilt," appeared a few years ago in a popular penny weekly, where, in a highly sensational scene the familiar episode of a nurse interfering to stay an operation, was served up again with all the accompaniments of melodrama.

Some typical examples of the modern novel nurse are to be found in the works of Mrs. L. T. Meade. In "The Medicine Lady," the heroine, who is first introduced as a probationer nurse at "St. Joseph's" Hospital, bears a certain resemblance to the sentimental hysterical type of probationer with whom Matrons and Sisters are sometimes afflicted, although in no hospital would she be allowed to behave as at St. Joseph's. A breach of discipline on her part is the cause finally of her dismissal, but the reader's sympathies are obviously intended to go with the insubordinate nurse, who is represented as the victim of harsh, unsympathetic rule—as too pure gold for the rough handling of hospital life.

Another book by the same author, entitled "A Girl in Ten Thousand," contains a transcendent model of a nurse, "Sister Dorothy" by name. She is the sister-in-charge of a children's ward, but while absent on a holiday, being entreated

to undertake a case of scarlatinal diphtheria, with noble self-sacrifice she at once consents to forfeit her remaining time of rest, oblivious of the trifling facts that she is due to return to the hospital in a week, and must run the risk of conveying infection to the children under her care. She calmly decides off-hand that "they can wait for her" at the hospital, should she be detained beyond the appointed time, and proceeds forthwith to her self-chosen work. On arrival, she finds the little patient, an only child, in a dangerous condition, and all in terror and confusion, but her marvellous influence quickly prevails. She takes the ordering of everything and everyone into her own hands, the doctor included, to whom she suggests a new remedy, which he confesses he "has never heard of," but consents to try at her request, and, strange commentary!—as he descends the stairs, soliloquises thus:—"What a blessing is a well trained nurse!" The extravagant burlesque of hospital life and nurses in "The Christian," by Hall Caine, is too recent and well-known to need more than passing comment. It caused great indignation among nurses, who resented it as a libel upon themselves, but that it was not so intended by the author is evident, since in a subsequent essay, referring to the heroine, who, as a nurse, at least is intolerable, he speaks of the "perhaps audacious, but sweet and pure character of Glory Quayle." That is the worst of it,—our detractors are usually well-intentioned!

The private nurse is a favourite character in novels and on the stage, but I have not come across one convincing picture. Whether represented as an angel of mercy or an unprincipled adventuress, she is alike stagey and unreal. And the life portrayed is generally so romantic, so exciting! Ah, we know, we who are or have been private nurses, how different is the reality. Although in her varied experiences the private nurse must meet with many a romance or tragedy in real life, she usually plays a subordinate part, not the leading rôle and we could not recommend the life to anyone in search of continuous thrills of excitement. As lived from day to day in the seclusion of one sick room after another, it seems anything but exciting or romantic—often painfully monotonous.

The novel has yet to be written which shall truly represent nurses and their work. We do not crave notoriety, yet, having suffered so much mis-representation, it is to be desired as an antidote that some writer would create a picture of a nurse equal to that of the doctor in "Middlemarch" or the woman medical student in "Mona Maclean."

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