

### Standing the Test.

DEAR MADAM.

I think Miss Gardner's paper has not attracted as much attention as it deserved. I suppose press of business at Christmas time will account for this fact. I think that fiction and, if you will excuse me, Madam, the modern habit of carrying every grievance to the public press, are answerable for the tone of grumbling about the overworking of probationers, of which we hear so much.

Are we, as women, becoming so enervated by the luxuriousness of the age that we cannot do what our predecessors have done? Miss Gardner quotes from Miss Nightingale's introduction to the life of Agnes Jones. I wish it could be printed for every hospital nurse to read, mark, learn and digest. It is more applicable in many ways to us at this beginning of the 20th century than it was 30 years ago. I venture to quote a few words from it:—"The happiest people, the fondest of their occupation, the most thankful for their lives, are, in my opinion, those engaged in sick nursing. In my opinion, it is a mere abuse of words to represent the life, as is done by some, as a sacrifice and a martyrdom." And she continues later:—"Three-fourths of the whole mischief in women's lives arises from their excepting themselves from the rules of training considered needful for men."

No good result can ever be obtained except at the cost of some trouble to ourselves, and those women who enter the profession of nursing without counting the cost to themselves beforehand, had much better stand aside, because without the earnestness of purpose which can laugh at difficulties and can gain strength from the exercise of their powers, they will be sure to fail. All professional successes are gained by labour and self-denial; those who take life very easily must be prepared for failure in the nursing profession, as well as in every other.

But I think it only fair to the majority of the probationers of the present day, to admit that though they may not attain to the zeal and self-sacrifice of the pioneers in the work, yet they are neither the Glory Quayle of fiction, nor yet neurotic weaklings such as the nurse described in the article in the *Humanitarian* to which Miss Gardner alludes. I heard this article discussed and condemned in most unequivocal terms by the nurses in this Infirmary; and if E. French would only write to the principal hospitals to get a list of hours on duty and off, and of meals supplied to the nurses, she would soon find that the nurses thoroughly appreciate their

time of training and are only sorry when the three years come to an end.

If our nurses of the future are to equal their predecessors, they must be prepared not only to learn the technique and theory of their profession, which might be acquired by close study in a short time, but they must also be ready for the more exacting training of their moral nature which the hours spent in the wards are meant to teach. Discipline, almost like that of a soldier, cannot be learned from books or gained without training. The qualities of obedience, punctuality, methodical work, patience with the sick, and self-forgetfulness, are only acquired by practice, and for all these the three years in the wards will be none too long. My experience shows me that these qualities are often terribly lacking in the young women who come for training, and that often in the wards, if the Sister in charge had not gone through the discipline of training on her own account, she would without further ado report them as hopeless muddlers who would never be fit for anything; but because she has seen what training can do, she goes bravely on with her task of making bricks in the hope that the necessary straw will be found to exist in the clay with which she is working.

If the outside public would kindly let us alone or try and find out the truth, rather than draw fancy pictures of horrors which do not exist, we should get on much better. Most Matrons are the good friends of their probationers; the probationers are not all ungrateful for the thought and care we expend on them. Most of us know what it is to be not only Matron, but friend to our subordinates, and most probationers know that the old truth that rulers are not a terror to the good, and if they do what is good they need neither hate nor fear their rulers. If the necessary training were really such cruel slavery as we are told, whence comes the eagerness for a chance to undergo the slavery; how is it that those who have been trained advise others to go in for it? Surely common sense refutes the slanders which are being circulated about life in hospital.

H. C. POOLE,

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[Owing to lack of space we are compelled to hold over admirable letters on this subject from Miss Todd, of Bournemouth, and Miss Pell-Smith, of Leicester, both of which we shall have pleasure in publishing in forthcoming issues.—ED.]

Just as we go to press we have received a letter from Mr. Stephen Townesend, F.R.C.S., on "Limits of Scientific Research." It will appear next week.

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