

ing details of the Nursing department. They rely entirely upon their officials in these matters. If these are attacked, the committee apparently consider it a matter of honour to support them blindly, rather than to endeavour without bias to find out if there is any just cause for the attack. The officials themselves cannot be expected to pass a vote of censure upon their own administration, and the Nurses, as a rule, dare not complain. How should it be otherwise? In a Hospital conducted on the lines of the London the Nurse's professional career is absolutely at the mercy of the very official who is responsible for the organization of the Nursing. If a Nurse displeases the Matron in any way, she may be dismissed peremptorily without a certificate, even although she may have given nearly two years of her life to the service of the Hospital, and may perhaps have paid for her training a sum of money which has exhausted her slender resources; or she may be given a certificate on which no one would employ her; or, again, if her certificate is apparently good, when anyone desiring to engage her applies to the Matron for further information, a private letter may be written (based on records in a private register of imputed faults of which a Nurse had never been formally accused, and of which she was absolutely ignorant) which will be an effectual bar to employment."

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"Those inexperienced in the working of a community of women, ruled by women, cannot realize in how many little ways a Nurse is made to feel the undesirability of incurring the displeasure of her superiors, by any opposition to, or criticism of, the order of things as they are. As an instance of the want of freedom to express their opinion, I will cite two small occurrences which came under my own notice during the inquiry before the House of Lords' Committee. A Nurse in the Hospital wished to write to an old friend, one of the witnesses before the Committee. Thinking it more prudent to post the letter outside the Hospital, she carried it about for some days; but as from overpressure of work her leave out was stopped several days in succession, she finally posted it in the box inside the Hospital. The following day she was reproached with having written this letter. I do not for a moment suggest that the letter had been opened; but the address had evidently been examined and noted. Another Nurse kindly consented, at my request, to accompany me through the wards of the Hospital. She was told that her conduct in so doing was disloyal and disgraceful. The estimation in which this Nurse had been held is shown by the fact that she had been sent out to nurse private cases three times before she had been eighteen months in the Hospital, and was Staff-nurse during the greater part of her training. During the whole two years not the smallest fault had been recorded against her, yet at the end of her time she received only a modified, or, so to speak, a second-class certificate. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion, that this faint praise was due to the crime of showing me through the wards. She was, moreover, told that by her hostility to the Hospital she had ruined the chances of her career as a Nurse."

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"Again, during the inquiry in the House of Lords, a scroll, purporting to be an address of condolence with the Matron, signed by numerous Nurses, was handed in by her to the Committee. A hurried glance at the document disclosed the name of a Nurse known to be in sympathy with the criticisms of the nursing arrangements which had been tendered before the Committee. She was asked, how she could have been induced to sign the address. She replied, that she had never done so. The document was subsequently withdrawn from the Lords' Committee, and such was the persuasive pressure (of which I hold a detailed account) brought to bear upon

the Nurse in question, and also on another Nurse in the same ward who had not signed, that after a considerable time they were induced to add their signatures. So much for any chance of reform at the instance of the Nurses!"

This last is a most grave charge. The question is—If this Nurse did not sign her name, and it was placed on the scroll, *who committed the forgery?* It is an accusation which the Committee of the London Hospital cannot permit to remain unrefuted for an hour longer than they can help, and they must acknowledge the fact that the Editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* does not evidently intend to recognize "emphatic denials," and is demanding *proofs*.

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BUT the key-note of Mrs. HUNTER's article is evidently the desire to render help. She continues:—

"But the practical question now suggests itself, in what way can the present re-opening of the subject be made productive of good result? I will ask to be allowed, through the medium of your influential paper, to suggest a course of action which I think might pave the way for useful work. I am anxious to see formed a committee of ladies and gentlemen, influential subscribers to this Hospital and others, who would pledge themselves to take a more active interest in the particular Hospital to which they subscribe than is now usually the case, who would endeavour to find out the conditions under which the Nurses work, and would seek by their united influence to remedy any abuse which they might find to exist. The idea of the desirability of such a committee occurred to me nearly two years ago, and I discussed its feasibility with a few friends. Some leading medical men and matrons of Hospitals, as well as several ladies whose names are well known and respected, expressed their sympathy with the plan, and promised to give their support as members of a general committee. Unfortunately a prolonged period of serious ill health prevented me from taking any further steps in the matter, and those to whom I had spoken on the subject, while they expressed their sympathy and their willingness to join a general committee, were too much engaged with other work with which they were personally identified to be able to take up the burden of inaugurating any new movement. I am still, unfortunately, unable to do much work myself, but I should be very happy to hear from any one who could actively assist in forming such a society. I need hardly add that all the information I possess, and any assistance in my power, would be at the disposal of any society which might be formed."

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I THINK such an Association as suggested by Mrs. HUNTER would, if properly organized, bring about many reforms in our hospitals, and be productive of immense good. From such an Association, intelligent men and women, who would take the trouble to visit hospitals and compare their systems of management, and would, therefore, be qualified for their duties, might be drawn for the House Committees of the future. The fatal mistake at present is that these bodies are largely composed of persons who take no personal interest or responsibility concerning the internal arrangements and details of the Institutions over which they preside.

S. G.

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