

"The Truth about the London Hospital."

A LARGE number of letters concerning the Nursing management at the London Hospital have appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, during the past week. With very few exceptions they corroborate the indictment of the Special Commissioner of our contemporary, many adding additional evidence and further grave facts concerning the systems in force. It now becomes absolutely imperative that the Committee should at once accept the open and unprejudiced inquiry demanded by our contemporary or resign their posts, because their silence appears like an attempt to evade further investigation of their management, and is naturally construed by the public in the only possible manner. The following are amongst the most instructive letters which have appeared.

To the Editor of the PALL MALL GAZETTE.

"Sir,—As one who has worked for some time in the London Hospital as a Sister, and can, therefore, speak with authority, I feel it my duty to place the result of my experience before the public in your columns for the sake of the future well-being of that splendid Institution, to which I am deeply attached. In half-a-dozen words the whole system of management is rotten to the core. No reform is possible unless the present Committee, which is ruled by half-a-dozen men, who resent criticism, are removed and replaced by men of ability, and unless a searching public inquiry is held into the whole management of the Institution. I can only corroborate every line written by your Special Commissioner as to the total lack of supervision by the Matron or the House Governor of the Sisters in their ward management. The Matron only visits the wards about twice a year, and I have never known her to inspect the lavatory, kitchen, or bathroom on my division. The present House-Governor is an inexperienced youth, who, prior to his appointment as Secretary to the London Hospital, had absolutely no experience or knowledge of Hospital administration at all. The Matron has been for years the absolute and autocratic ruler of the London Hospital and the authority of the Committee a myth and a delusion. With regard to the disorganised condition of the Nursing department, I have only to state that, as a Sister, I found it impossible to have the patients efficiently nursed by the constant influx of raw Probationers who were sent to me by the Matron to perform the duties which should only devolve upon experienced Nurses, and the numerous breakdowns of health amongst the Nursing staff was mainly due to the great mental strain experienced by these untrained workers. As to the accusation made by your Special Commissioner with regard to the system of tittle-tattle and espionage between the Sisters and the Matron, it was not only the Nurses who suffered, as we Sisters who refused to connive at this method were made to feel that our conduct was resented at head-quarters. I have heard an unfrocked Sister state that the reason that her services were not appreciated in the office was that she could not supply daily a sufficiently savoury

bulletin of gossip. I possess notes and documentary evidence of what I state, which I shall be glad to place at your disposal should you insist, as I hope you will, upon obtaining a public and *unbiased inquiry* by independent persons into the present régime in force at the London Hospital."—I am,

A LATE LONDON HOSPITAL SISTER.

This lady is evidently a friend of the Hospital in the truest sense. She testifies to the truth of the Special Commissioner's charges; she shows that the Committee object to reform, that the personal supervision by the Matron "has lapsed," and yet that she is "virtually an autocrat," that the control of a youthful and inexperienced House Governor over this "strong ruler" and her department is of necessity a farce, that it was impossible to nurse the patients efficiently with the raw material sent by the Matron to perform the duties of a trained Nurse, and that the Nurses are terrorised by espionage.

"Sir,—As an old London Hospital Probationer, who broke down in health after eighteen months in the Hospital, I should like to draw attention to the cruelty with which the children were treated in "Queen" children's surgical ward—a ward also notorious for hard work. There were over fifty cots in the two divisions of the ward, the staff on day duty being two staff Nurses and four Probationers; on night duty two staff Nurses and one Probationer; so that during the day there were nine children under seven years of age for each Nurse; and when it is remembered that each Nurse was off duty two hours per day, one had often to attend to the wants of double that number. I, myself, was night Nurse, and had twenty-seven patients under my sole care, six of them babies under one year. The ward had to be kept spotlessly clean at any cost of discomfort to the patients; the children, too, were kept clean all over, and in this differed from many of the adult patients. Everything was sacrificed to the appearance of the ward, as it is on the ground floor, and a touching ward through which to bring the kindly visitors; and I know it was a greater source of income to the Hospital than a dozen newspaper appeals. But the poor little inmates were very roughly and often unkindly used. I shall never forget one morning hearing piercing screams from the bath room. I knew it was no child from my ward, but at last I could stand it no longer and went to the night Nurse of the other division of the ward and asked what was happening. She said the day Nurse who came on duty at 7 a. m., and was then responsible, was bathing a burnt child, who had just been brought in. The Nurse soon appeared with a sobbing little child in her arms—clean, certainly, but in agonies of pain and terror. The child was very ill by the evening, and no wonder. It makes my blood boil even now to think of it. But what could be done?

I have seen the children seized out of bed and dumped down on the floor for crying when in pain; I have found a baby with its night dress turned up in a particular way as I left it in the morning, proving the poor mite had never been taken up or its position altered all day.

The crying of these suffering children was often heart-rending; but they could not be soothed or attended to, for there was not time. Many Nurses, who said they were fond of children, and who came to the ward intending to be kind, were so overworked and in such a frantic hurry that

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