

mittee" referred to by "A Friend of the Hospital" writing in the same issue. It is altogether beside the question. No one disputes that the London Hospital is "an admirable Institution," or "that it is doing a great work," and is deserving of the greatest measure of charitable support." But surely all the more is it necessary that the abuses complained of by so many should be removed. Your Special Commissioner had every opportunity of ascertaining the real position of affairs—was, indeed, honestly sent with that object in view—and has given a very truthful report, and the public are greatly indebted for it.

Mr. Roberts says: "We do not mind any one coming here openly, and investigating the whole place," &c. Exactly so. But supposing any complaint were made by a Nurse under such circumstances, no matter how well founded, she would be at once "marked"—would find herself subject to all sorts of petty annoyances; would soon be "reported" by some compliant Sister, and her career would be closed.

In all cases where complaints have been made this has been the result. The Matron has the fate of Probationers entirely in her hands as she can refuse their certificate or dismiss them for any cause, real or imaginary, before the requisite time has been served to entitle them to a certificate, when all their time will have been wasted. Nurses are therefore afraid to complain, no matter what their grievance: indeed it is admitted that "complaints to visitors are not allowed;" how then can the truth be ascertained except by some such means as your paper has adopted?

These complaints are not made by those who have no taste for Nursing, but many who are intensely attached to their calling, and have a real vocation for it, and who have borne every annoyance rather than give up their profession.

Mr. Roberts admits that the duties of a night Nurse are 'very laborious and arduous.' Does Mr. Roberts know the kind of supper frequently served out to these night Nurses to prepare them for their 'arduous duties'? Is he aware that many of them save out of their hardly-earned salary in order that they may be able to buy their own supper, as they are often unable to eat what is put before them? It is not that the food is bad in itself, but it is, in many cases, so villainously prepared as to be quite uneatable. I know some of the best Staff Nurses in the Hospital who buy their suppers; and when I have said, 'Why don't you complain?' they reply, 'It is no use of one or two complaining; we should get ourselves into trouble and do no good.' Compare this with the food prepared for the Sisters, for whom every dainty is provided. Such a wide difference ought not to exist; the duties are equally laborious and require as much support in the way of food. Does Mr. Roberts defend the Matron's black book, in which anything detrimental to a Nurse is put down—unknown to her—with no opportunity of denial? Take an instance:—'Too fond of talking to the students.' This stands for all time against a Nurse, and without her knowledge!

Take the admitted promotion of probationers "over the heads of staff Nurses, who have been for years in the hospital." This 'A Hard-worked One' defends on the astounding principle that 'it is surely better they should be over those who can do their own work without supervision, and who are sufficiently trained to keep their own place and let the Sister keep hers.' It would seem to an outsider the Sister's 'own place' is to instruct her less experienced subordinates, and the Nurse's 'own place' to obey the instructions of her more experienced superior. According to 'A Hard-

worked One,' 'the Sister, being totally inexperienced, and therefore incompetent, is to rely on the long experience of the Staff Nurses to prevent her getting things into a confusion while she is being trained by her subordinates!' I suppose this is one of the results of a 'weak committee.' Surely a 'strong ruler' should have a 'strong committee,' or there will be the inevitable result of favouritism and injustice, if not downright tyranny—the very evils complained of by many of the real friends of the hospital. Surely if the committee is 'weak' it is for the interest of all concerned that it should be strengthened.

One much-needed improvement has recently been inaugurated, viz., an allowance for laundry. Prior to this each Nurse had to pay about three shillings a week under this head, leaving her barely the wages of a general servant just going out. This has given much satisfaction and done much to create confidence in the kindly interest of the Matron, and a more happy state of things generally."

#### ONE WITH MANY FRIENDS IN THE HOSPITAL.

To the EDITOR of the PALL MALL GAZETTE.

SIR,—Three years ago I was an interested and totally unbiassed listener to the evidence tendered by Miss Yatman and her fellow Nurses before the Select Committee of the House of Lords, concerning the mismanagement of the London Hospital. I also listened attentively to the two days' flow of eloquence with which the Matron attempted to disprove their charges, and it has always been a marvel to me that no action for libel resulted from the very hard swearing which then took place. *Either one side or the other had committed the most corrupt perjury; and if it was impossible for the courtly Lords to decide which, the Public Prosecutor should have stepped in.* This is à propos of an article entitled "Hospital Nursing" by Mrs. Robert Hunter, printed in your issue of the 4th inst., which I have read with renewed interest. She writes: "On one occasion a Nurse of a year's experience had charge of a ward containing thirty-nine patients (including extra beds). She had only one probationer to help her. It was impossible," to quote her own words, "to do one's duty to the patients with this force, to attend to all the serious cases at once. A patient had been ordered a vapour bath, the assistant mistook the patient for whom it had been ordered, put the wrong man in the bath and he died there." And again she mentions another patient who "bled to death after a serious operation because she had no special Nurse and hæmorrhage was not discovered until too late." Now what an inquiring public should demand to know is, what steps did the committee take when these deaths were reported to them? How were they explained to the coroner—that is to say, if that official was made acquainted with the facts at all—and if not, *who signed the death certificates and what did they affirm?* And again Mrs. Robert Hunter writes: "During the inquiry in the House of Lords a scroll purporting to be an address of condolence to 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 criticism 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." Again, an inquiring public wants to know, *who did sign this Nurse's name on the scroll?* In plain English, *who in the London Hospital was guilty of forgery?* These charges, publicly made by Mrs. Hunter, are far too serious to remain only "emphatically denied." The committee owe it to themselves, as well as to the

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