

be so wantonly cruel as to attack a charitable Institution for the relief of the suffering poor of London without at least believing that there was some foundation for the charge. Mr. RATHBONE is quite right in believing that we "took up the subject with the wish to promote the cause of good nursing and Hospital management." We had no other motive, and could have none. We, therefore, determined to employ a Commissioner who should report her own experiences in the Hospital. Her report was published, and it contained a series of criticisms of the management directed against alleged defects and shortcomings, all of which were obviously remediable. Most of her statements were directly corroborated by independent witnesses, and by correspondents who, though anonymous so far as the public was concerned, were not anonymous to us. It was hardly likely that Nurses should come forward and make charges against the management except under the protection of an impartial committee of investigation. Had they done so they would probably have ruined their professional prospects.

How was the criticism met? In four different and inconsistent ways. In the first place came a would-be furious attack upon us and our Commissioner in the columns of the *Hospital*—a journal intimately connected with the management of the institution in question, and speaking with a real or assumed authority on behalf of the Committee of Management. We were threatened with libel suits, and what not. This was followed by a letter from the Committee, which contained nothing but a blank unsupported denial of the criticisms made by our Commissioner and others. That of course carried the case no further than it was before. Nobody expected the Committee to admit that they did not take a right view of their duties of supervision, and allowed themselves, who should be the rulers, to be ruled with a rod of iron. Then after a lapse of time came batches of letters from visitors, nurses, and probationers, traversing the charges made by our Commissioner, but in no case disproving them. We have published as many of them as we could possibly find space for; and in selecting specimens we have invariably chosen those that spoke most warmly in defence of the management.

Now, last of all comes Mr. Rathbone. His defence does not strike us as particularly effective, or as calculated to restore that confidence, the lack of which may account in part for the withholding by the public of adequate funds. "No inexperienced person," he writes, "is capable of estimating the value of the evidence she (our Commissioner) thus obtains, especially at a time when the tendency to discontent and grumbling, not uncommon among all large bodies, has been fostered by the unscrupulous attacks which have been for more than three years directed against the

Hospital and its Matron. The majority of these accusations now brought forward were endlessly discussed and disproved before the Select Committee of the House of Lords. That the management of the London Hospital was considered sound after this most searching inquiry, was evidenced by the fact that after issuing their report, Lord Sandhurst, the chairman of that committee, qualified himself as a governor, and, subsequently, at a quarterly meeting of the governors and at a Mansion House meeting on behalf of the London Hospital, raised his voice in praise of the management and warmly seconded the Duke of Cambridge in his appeal for funds." This, again, does not dispose of the specific charges made in this controversy. We believe that Mr. Rathbone's advice is unsound. "One object of my letter," he says, "is to show the Committee and supporters of the London Hospital the futility and dangers of permitting old charges to be indefinitely brought forward, and of attempting any further refutations of them, merely to afford gratification to the malicious agitators who first suggested them." If this counsel is followed we have no more to say, but the responsibility for the consequences must rest with "the Committee and supporters." We have given them an opportunity to regain public confidence by disproving the charges which have been made not only in these columns, but elsewhere, or by remedying abuses where they exist. If they will not adopt either of these courses they cannot complain of the lack of public confidence. We renew our offer to take part in any committee of inquiry that may be instituted under the conditions we have formulated, viz., that it should be searching, impartial, and empowered to call, examine, and cross-examine witnesses. If this offer be again refused, the responsibility will rest solely with the managers of the London Hospital.

To the EDITOR of the PALL MALL GAZETTE.

SIR,—Experience shows that the anonymous assailants of our voluntary Hospitals will not take the smallest amount of trouble to ascertain the facts. Your correspondent "Apertus," aptly illustrates the truth of this statement. He declares that "one of the principal members of the Committee of the London Hospital is the editor of the *Hospital*." This is a transparent falsehood, easily capable of proof by reference to a report of the London Hospital, which is readily available, and which it is hardly creditable that "Apertus," seeing what he writes, should never have seen. The representatives of the London Hospital who signed the letter addressed to you are precisely accurate in their statement that "the *Hospital* has not the very remotest connection with the London Hospital." It exists to defend the voluntary system of Hospital

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)