

In the second play to which we have referred, the Nurse appears as a persecuted victim; and love and crime are inextricably mixed up with hysterical attacks and the criminal dock. The impression conveyed is that patients are in the habit of making their wills on their death-beds, and bequeathing all their real and personal property to their Nurses—a delicate compliment to the personal attractions possessed by these ladies. But as the patient in this case apparently died from the effects of poison, it is clear that the author's opinion of the trustworthiness of the lady, and her knowledge of her work, is at least open to question. In fact, friends and relations must naturally view the bewitching Nurse with as much alarm, as any patient of ordinary discrimination ought strongly to object to her very lax, not to say reckless, views concerning the administration of poisonous drugs. The play in question was absurdly improbable in plot, but sufficed to exhibit a second phase of public opinion concerning the attractive personality of a trained Nurse.

In the third play—which has just concluded a most successful run—a Nurse in full uniform—of course, with her cloak widely open, so as to display her apron and an arrangement of warlike implements—takes a prominent part in the fashionable promenade at Hyde Park Corner. She, apparently, is well-acquainted with all the habitués of Rotten Row, and is on terms of more or less easy familiarity with the various titled persons in the piece. It would be interesting to know whether this Nurse was supposed to be in attendance upon one of the promenaders; or, if not, whatever she was doing in the fashionable throng—dressed in her outdoor uniform. A remarkable fact is that one of the authors of this piece rarely, if ever, makes a dramatic blunder; and he, therefore, is undoubtedly reflecting the views of some considerable section of the public in thus depicting the trained Nurse of the day as one who takes an active part—in uniform—in the fashionable world.

In the fourth play to which we have alluded, a damsel, who is in love—with a gentleman's beard—and who is cured of her affection by the removal of the hirsute appendages in question, in broken-hearted accents announces her intention of becoming "a Hospital Nurse." Whereupon her father, who is evidently not unversed in the ways of women, determines to "let her have her own

way," and informs the audience that she "shall go to Bartholomew's." It seems that he is acquainted with "the house surgeon" at that well-known institution, and it is inferred that the gentleman in question will of course, therefore, admit his daughter, at once, as a Nurse, and that he will, furthermore, at the desire of this fond parent, be good enough to place her in the ward "with the nastiest cases." Such an extensive acquaintance with Hospital management, and the respective duties to the public and to the Nurses, discharged by the resident medical staff of our Metropolitan Hospitals, must afford unqualified pleasure to any of the audience who have any knowledge of the subject.

It is interesting to observe how completely unaware playwrights appear to be of the actual work of Trained Nurses, and even of the existence of Hospital Matrons, and of the duties which they severally have to perform, both in public institutions and in private houses. It would be an unmixed advantage if those who propose in future to introduce Trained Nurses into dramatic representations would take some little pains to acquaint themselves, previously, with the actual conditions of their work and duties.

Apart from the absurdities to which we have called attention, the highly significant fact which all the plays we have mentioned illustrate, and which the popular literature of the day still further exemplifies, is that the trained Nurse is recognised as a feature of the present work-a-day world. Her outward appearance—that is to say, her uniform—is so picturesque, and the vagaries of the young Probationer are so marked, that they lend themselves to—shall we say—misrepresentation. Speaking seriously, we cannot regard this condition of affairs as advantageous either for the Nursing profession or for the public. The best class of Nurses strongly dislike such publicity, and it is distinctly unfair both to them and to the sick that their real work and position should be so completely misunderstood. In time, however, there is every reason to hope that knowledge will increase upon both these important points, and that, then, misunderstandings will pass away, and the interest which is now so universally felt in the work of Nurses will be converted into a more practical appreciation of their work and reasonable sympathy with them as a class—to the great advantage both of the profession and of the public.

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