

papers. People offer to sleep in the house, but, I believe, the offer so far has not been accepted.

I am, dear Madam,  
Yours faithfully,  
SUPERINTENDENT.

[The interest which the correspondence upon "Ghosts," which has appeared in our columns, is creating is extraordinary. The above facts are vouched for by the superintendent of a large London nursing institution.]

THE EXPERIENCES OF A PRO TEM.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—I have been very interested to read in the *Daily Chronicle* that the Committee of the Registered Nurses' Society, of which, I believe, you are the Hon. Superintendent, will henceforth include six of the nurses themselves. I am especially interested in this, as I have on more than one occasion taken temporary duty for the superintendents of nursing institutions, both on the co-operative principle and upon the more old-fashioned lines, and what has struck me most of all is the exceeding lack of interest of the nurses in their own concerns. In the institutions where a definite salary is paid, and consequently secured to the nurses, whether they are at cases or no, this lack of interest is more understandable, though not, I think, commendable. But, in a co-operation I must say it is to me inexplicable. In this case the nurses receive all their own earnings, less a small percentage which they pay to the office for working expenses. It is to their own direct interest, therefore, that their affairs should prosper, and that applications should be made to their office for nurses. Do they ever try to get a case for themselves? With the rarest exceptions—*never*. Do they inquire how applications are coming in? Unless they want a case for themselves—*never*. Do they ask if the Society is paying its way, if the percentage covers office expenses, or if the demand for nurses is greater or less than the supply? *Never*.

There is a certain monotony about the conversation of the office. The following dialogue is typical of most that take place. (*Enter Nurse.*)

*Nurse*—Good morning.

*Superintendent*—Good morning.

*Nurse*—I left my patient this morning.

*Superintendent*—You will be ready for another case, then, if we want a nurse?

*Nurse*—Oh! I should like a few days' holiday first.

*Superintendent*—Well, I will put you last on the list, but we are very busy.

*Nurse*—Have you a cheque for me?

*Superintendent*—There is one drawn, but it is not signed. I did not think you would want it yet, as you had that big one about a week ago.

*Nurse*—Oh! that is all gone; in fact it was not enough to pay all I owed. I haven't a penny, only a French halfpenny and a lucky threepenny bit which I do not want to part with. I really *must* have a cheque as soon as ever you can get it for me.

*Superintendent*—Well, I will see about it.

*Nurse*—Thank you. Oh! Unless I am wanted, I sha'n't be in to-morrow evening, as I am going to the theatre. My address will be ———'s Hotel. Good-

bye. You won't forget about the cheque, will you? (*Exit Nurse.*)

This is, I assure you, more or less, what goes on, at intervals, all day. I should like to discover why it is that nurses who have incomes as large as many curates live and support a wife and family upon, and who, for the greater part of the year, have board, lodging, and washing at the expense of their patients, so rarely have a "penny to bless themselves with." I really do not believe that they are a bit better off than the nurses who are "sweated" by institutions, and who are paid about £30 a year. Of course, some private nurses do (all honour to them) help their poorer relations very considerably; but it is in the hope of provoking some comments on the more ordinary condition in which nurses, in the short intervals between their cases, seem to fritter away all that they have earned, that I venture to address this somewhat lengthy letter to you. It is also for the reason that I hope that nurses who take a part in the management of their own affairs will also take more interest in them, that I am delighted to see that the members of the Registered Nurses' Society are about to begin to manage their own concerns.

I am, dear Madam,  
Yours faithfully,  
PRO TEM.

A PRACTICAL POINT.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—I see you are kind enough to give advice on "practical points" in nursing matters. Will you express your views on the screen question? I have not long been matron here, but one thing worries me very much, and I don't know how to act for the best. Although this hospital contains upwards of sixty beds divided into five wards, we have only one screen, a lumbering old thing, far too heavy for nurses to carry about, and only used when a patient is dead, to hide the preparation of the corpse for the coffin. The head nurses here have never been in the habit of using screens, and, as there are no curtains, all delicacy and sense of decency seems conspicuous by their absence. In attending on the patients, many offices are performed by the nurses, for the patients, in public, which ought, for decency's sake, to be done privately—this especially in the male wards. I have spoken of the necessity for screens, but the doctors here "won't be bothered with fallals," and think nothing of exposing the patients before the nurses. The whole thing is disgusting, and must be reformed somehow.

Yours,  
A YOUNG MATRON.

[We have heard this complaint before, and agree with our correspondent that "it must be reformed somehow." We should advise the following course of action. Speak with each member of the medical staff attached to the hospital, and point out the lack of decorum in the present want of care, both for the feelings of the patients and the nurses—lay the matter quite plainly before the Committee, and insist upon a liberal supply of screens (two at least for each ward) being ordered; and then instruct the head nurses that they are to be used on all occasions when privacy is desirable. We think by these means the difficulty will be overcome.—ED.]

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