

Probationers are for the ready performance of such duties as bed-making, dusting of floors, and washing of fellow-creatures, the marvel to our minds has ever been that the work is always done with punctuality and despatch, and with so little friction. It is most rare, even in a wide experience, to hear Probationers complain of harshness, or even continued unfairness; while it is a matter of common knowledge that, after a very short period of service, most of them become, not only enthusiastic about their work, but also about the particular good qualities of head or heart of Sisters A, B, and C, and Nurses D, E, and F, under whom they have so far been working. That there are a few grievous exceptions—Hospitals where the ill-governed mind or temper of one woman makes the lives and work of every member of the Nursing Department miserable and unsatisfactory—cannot, unfortunately, be denied; but we are encouraged to hope that they are very few in number.

To pass, therefore, to our second argument. When it is stated that Hospital Nurses are working for at least twelve—and in some instances fourteen or fifteen—hours a day; not only engaged in such manual labour as must be most trying to feminine physical strength, but superadded to this have also to bear a certain—sometimes a considerable—amount of mental strain and responsibility; that this continues week after week, month after month, for forty-nine or fifty weeks out of every year; and that all this work is performed in the most depressing atmosphere, and in the midst of constant suffering, disease, and death—surely, no more need be urged in proof of the assertion that such women are over-worked. But if further evidence of the stress of the calling were needed, it can be abundantly furnished by its effects upon the workers. It is well known that it is most rare for anyone, however strong and healthy she may have been at first, to pass through a course of three years' training without once breaking down; and that, in most instances, the health very considerably deteriorates during the term of training, or even, in many cases, gives way altogether, so that the profession has to be finally relinquished. We would draw the more attention to this fact, and emphasise, as strongly as we possibly can, the physical and mental strain Hospital work necessarily entails upon Nurses, because it would appear to be self-evident that it is all the more incumbent, therefore, upon the managers of such Institutions, to do all in their power to maintain the health and strength of their employées at as high a level as possible.

Putting aside, for the present, other matters in which improvements could easily be made, it is quite clear that Nurses should be provided with a sufficiency of wholesome, well-cooked food. We

consider that all the responsibility for this rests on the Committees of Management, because it is clearly their duties to direct that such an essential matter should receive scrupulous attention; and, moreover, to ascertain that their orders are carried out efficiently. Perhaps the Committee appoints a Steward, and he appoints a Housekeeper, and she appoints a Cook, and each thinks thereby to shift upon some one else's shoulders all trouble in the matter. But there should be no mistake in this. The Committee is responsible to the public for the good working of the Hospital over which it presides, and efficiency certainly cannot be maintained if its workers are unable to perform their duties, because their bodies are not sufficiently nourished. The blame, therefore, for the bad food supplied to Nurses will be laid by the public to the charge of Committees of Management. We are aware what estimable and charitable gentlemen these always comprise; and, therefore, with the greatest earnestness we call their attention, individually and collectively, to this important subject. We would say that by sufficient nourishment we mean *good* meat, vegetables, milk, and groceries, well-cooked or prepared for use, and well-served at regular hours.

Two things must be remembered. Most Hospital Nurses come from comfortable or even luxurious homes, and although they do not expect delicacies, they may claim to have some variety in their food. Cold pork for supper and breakfast, and hot pork for dinner, is apt to pall upon the strongest digestion. To our minds, however, one of the most important facts is that the meals should be served well. To come, tired and exhausted, from a long morning's work in the Wards, and either to find the dinner late, be obliged to wait, and then hurriedly devour it, or to discover everything lukewarm or cold, and in sheer distaste be unable to eat anything, and return to work more tired than ever, is as bad for the work as it must be for the workers. We have laid stress upon the necessity for *good* meat. Most Hospitals are supplied by contract, and whether contractors are aware that Nurses are a very long-suffering class, or whatever else may be the reason, one fact is common to most Institutions: it is extremely rare for *fresh* meat to be delivered for the use of the Nursing Staff; it is almost invariably old and tough, and oftentimes quite unfit for human food. In the next place, the cooking of the food is most important, and if this be badly done—however *good* its quality—the result is once more emptiness of stomach, and vexation of spirit.

But to formulate distinctly the grounds of complaint. Nurses are at most Hospitals under-fed, be-

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