

all their expenses the Private Nurses bring in a net income to the London Hospital of more than £1,200 a year! and that the Matron states that she receives an addition to her ordinary salary on account of this department.

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"YOUR readers will also find in the Blue Book that the Hospital authorities admitted that they have made the Matron an absolute autocrat, giving her the power of 'dispensing with the services' of any Probationer or Nurse, and you will doubtless be told of many instances in which women have been summarily dismissed, and their whole professional careers checked, if not totally ruined. If they were to appeal to the Committee, the Lords were told that it would hardly avail them much, as the Matron's version, and probably hers only, would be taken. These women, from experience, know this. Their very livelihood in many cases depends upon the Matron's unchecked will, and if they are told to sign petitions or write letters in her favour they *must* do it. My letter has already, I fear, been too long, or I could tell you many facts which have made many men and women's blood boil with indignation, and which have brought the good name of the largest English Hospital into the greatest disrepute. For its own sake, and for the welfare of the sick poor within it—for the comfort and even the safety of Nurses—for the protection of the public generally—there are many who look to your powerful aid to expose the present state of wrong and crying injustice—to demand a full inquiry, and to rest not until reform, complete and absolute, has been obtained.—I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

C. B. M."

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A VERY important letter, in the last issue of the *British Medical Journal*, on Nurses and their treatment, is also of particular value and interest just now. It is as follows:—

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"SIR,—Having at one time been a House Surgeon, and being consequently well acquainted with the grievances of Nurses, I have followed with interest the articles and correspondence on the management of Hospitals in the *British Medical Journal* and elsewhere. I think your correspondent, 'A Late House Surgeon,' in your issue of September 20th, has called attention to a very important person, who has never, at least so far as I have seen, been heard at all—namely, the subordinate Nurse. I cannot say anything regarding the status of Nurses in English Hospitals, as my experience has been limited to north of the Tweed. I have often thought that in a small way I might have done something to rectify matters, but most of your readers are aware of

the small say a temporary official like a House Surgeon has in regard to the management of affairs.

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"I AM in a position to know that many of the hardships which existed in my day are still in existence, and seem as far as ever from being redressed. The Hospital to which I refer is a small provincial Hospital of one hundred and eighty beds, and is managed on the economical system by a Board of Directors supposed to be elected by the subscribers, but to all intents and purposes self-elected, so small seems to be the interest taken in its management by outsiders. To enter into all the grievances would be too much of a trespass on your space. I speak of the Nurses only when I say that their accommodation was abominable. Four of the Staff Nurses had rooms on the stair-heads, which were the size of and apparently intended for bath rooms. I cannot give you exact dimensions, but they held with difficulty a small bedstead and a chair—that is, they were the length of the bedstead and the breadth of the bed and chair.

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"THE Probationers and Night Nurses were rather better off as regards air space, being accommodated in two dormitories, which, however, were furnished in the most scanty manner; the bare whitewashed walls, the faded counterpanes on the beds, and the few old parti-coloured strips of carpet on the bare floor did not look inviting to the newcomer, who had left in most instances a comfortable home. They apparently, however, got used to it. They were mostly Probationers of the first year, and did not know how Nurses were housed elsewhere; and if they did know they were only there for a year, and did not care to get into hot water, seeing they were there for so short a time. There was no sitting-room; any friend had either to be taken to these dormitories or to the furnished bath-rooms if calling on a Staff Nurse. There was not a single recreation of any description whatever provided. I cannot enter into details regarding the food. There was nothing wrong with the quantity, but everything was of the roughest, the butcher's meat especially being very bad. If a Nurse was the least below par, she usually touched nothing, except some nicety she provided for herself.

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"THE Matron was a terror in the land. I scarcely ever remember a Nurse complaining of being ill until she was no longer able to keep her feet. In several instances, when a Nurse persisted in getting up to her work day after day, I have seen her fellow-Nurses prevent her rising and inform the Matron of how ill she was. Of course, a

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