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EDITORIAL.

HOSPITAL NOVELS.

Of recent years several novels have been published purporting to depict hospital life, and the relations of doctors and nurses from the inside. One dealing with life in a cottage hospital raised a storm of protest, we think justly, at the time of its publication. Now we have *The Night Nurse* reviewed in our columns this week.

Does the average novel give a truthful picture of life behind the scenes in a hospital? If so, then the ideals of nurses in training, and the discipline maintained by the heads of nursing schools, must have deteriorated of recent years. In any case, if the parents of carefully brought up daughters take their ideas of hospital life from the fiction of the period, we cannot wonder at the dearth of earnest-minded probationers to fill numerous vacancies, for what mother would wish her young daughter to join the nursing staff of a hospital where—by means of an elaborate system of deception—flirtations and clandestine tea-parties continually take place in the wards at night, and the house-surgeon on duty remarks to the surgery nurse that if wanted he is to be found by telephoning to a certain ward, by which she perfectly well understands that she is expected to warn him should a visit from the night superintendent be imminent, for “the wordless understanding” between them was complete, and we are told of this “very junior nurse” that she “had imbibed sufficient of the curious hospital spirit to look forward eagerly to the time when she too should have risen to the dignity of ‘charge nurse’ which would allow her to indulge in the dangerous joys of surreptitious tête-à-têtes.” A more unwholesome atmosphere, or unworthy aspiration, for a probationer is difficult to imagine; moreover

deception would not end there, for a nurse who is untrustworthy in one particular, is not to be relied upon in others.

Again, is the popular novel responsible in part for the distrust and hostility felt by the public towards trained nurses? For the private nurse suffers for the derelictions of her hospital sister, and there is no doubt that the public, in many instances, regard nurses with a certain degree of suspicion. Part of this attitude must be attributed to the natural dislike of relatives to relinquish the nursing of those dear to them to others. But we think no fair-minded nurse can be surprised if wives and mothers are averse to leaving their sick husbands and sons through the long night watches when they have preconceived prejudices concerning nurses derived from novels of hospital life, although the nurse concerned may possess the highest professional skill.

We do not believe that the modern novel presents a fair picture to the public of hospital life, but we would remind nurses that, to a great extent, it is its only source of information, and that it behoves them to be especially circumspect and professional in their relations, not only with patients, but with patients' friends and relatives. They live continually in the full searchlight of criticism, and any slight indiscretion may be quite wrongly construed.

Moreover a nurse has great and grave responsibilities, and sobriety and restraint of demeanour become her. Far be it from us to desire to see nurses lugubrious; cheeriness and brightness are most helpful in a sick household, and appreciated by all concerned, but frivolity and lightness, even if harmless, are quite out of place and to be condemned. Each nurse should remember that she has the honour of her profession in her keeping, and should guard it jealously as a most precious and sacred possession.

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