

a conscientious and sympathetic nurse. But the objects of her greatest compassion are her fellow nurses, overworked women, into whose hard lives the sun does not shine. There is no separate, regulated system of night nursing. The nurses are often at work night and day. Else is horrified at the callous unconcern of the doctors, and the hardness of the Head Sister or Matron, herself a victim to overwork.

She tells herself that her mission in life must be to help her fellow nurses. Dr. Arndt, a high-minded and sympathetic man, the only doctor she can respect, encourages her to rouse them to a sense of their oppression, and to break down their prison doors, and promises to help her to start a reform movement, the objects being better pay and shorter hours. The would-be reformer experiences many disasters and scandals as the result of the slavery of the Sisters, besides which they are continually leaving in order to seek better conditions for themselves. The girl considers it her duty to report to the Matron the flighty conduct of two of the young probationers. She is snubbed for her pains, and no steps are taken towards investigation. The disappearance of the girls with two of the doctors is the result.

After this tragedies come thick and fast. One Sister is taken ill, and dies from the effect of overstrain. Another commits suicide by drowning herself; a third acquires the morphia habit and is only just saved from suicide by Else, who enters the room at the psychological moment when the young nurse is in the act of putting a glass of poison to her lips, and dashes it out of her hand. This incident, and the scene which follows—described with dramatic vividness—form one of the most pathetic parts of the story. The head doctor, hearing a scuffle, enters. He is met with a torrent of reproach from the poor distracted girl, who blames him for his heartless unconcern at the sufferings of the Sisters. She is finally taken to a lunatic asylum as a suicidal maniac.

Bad as things are, the lives of the Sisters generally are made considerably happier by the appointment of a new Head Sister, a marked contrast to her predecessors. Sister Alma is both capable and sympathetic. She endeavours to better the position of the nurses, but finds her task extremely difficult without support. The Sisters continue to fall ill from overwork. In despair she goes to visit the Mayor—the hospital is under Municipal control—and begs for six months' leave for an overworked nurse; he gives a grudging promise to bring the matter before the Committee. A shortened leave is the result. Else Schön now begins to show signs of overwork, and Sister Alma, to whom she has become very much attached, sends her home for a month's holiday. She breaks down with an attack of phthisis. Her disillusionment, together with her disappointment in having to give up the work she really loves, preys upon her mind and she becomes deeply depressed. At this time Sister Alma writes to tell Else that she is obliged to resign her post, because her desire for reform is

inconvenient to the authorities. The girl tells her parents, who invite her to stay with them. Her forceful character and kindly, unselfish disposition endear her to all members of the family. She fearlessly reproves Else for her selfishness in grieving her good parents by her persistent melancholy, and points out that there is other work for her to do now that she has recovered, also that her fate is infinitely better than that of so many of the Sisters, who have not the good home and care that she has been able to enjoy. Else accepts the reproof and rouses herself. Sister Alma, hearing of a new organisation which has been established with the object of securing better conditions for the secular Nursing Sisters, eagerly joins it, and persuades Else to use her pen and past experience in writing for the organ of this society. She gladly avails herself of the opportunity. There can be little doubt that this society is the well-known *Berufsorganisation der Krankenpflegerinnen*, of which Sister Agnes Karll—to whom the book is dedicated—is the honoured president.

Else fights one more battle with herself and wins. Dr. Arndt writes that he has a very good post, and begs her to share it with him. She is faced with a difficult decision. For a moment she conjures up visions of a happy life with a noble-hearted man; here was the realisation of her aspirations within her grasp; together they could work for the good of mankind. After a brief struggle with herself she writes to decline the offer of the man she loves, on the ground that a delicate wife would be a hindrance and not a help to him.

The writer has ably accomplished what she set out to do, namely, she has shown up with vivid realism the terrible conditions of life and work among the hospital Sisters. She points out the stupidity of a system which allows one set of people, whose lives are of value to the State, to help to cure others while they kill themselves in the attempt, the cruelty to the Sisters themselves, the callous indifference of the doctors and the public, and the moral detriment to humanity generally, of deliberately and ruthlessly destroying the ideals of warm, aspiring hearts. Sister Wolff very truly says that "to have one's idealism reduced to practicability, and to have one's misconceptions of the world and life made clear, is wholesome, but the blessing of work is lost, if by overwork ideals are destroyed."

This book was quoted by Dr. Hecker in his paper read at Cologne, and it is most earnestly to be desired that it should be widely read by the German public. There can be little doubt that it would awaken the corporate conscience to a sense of its most obvious duty in putting an end to such a scandalous state of affairs.

We can confidently assure the author—to whom we offer our thanks for her altruism—of the sincere sympathy of her English sisters, who hope that the pathetic and able appeal for "Mehr Sonne" in the lives of German nurses will receive a generous response.

BEATRICE KENT.

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