

THE NURSE AND HER CRITICS.

The *Pall Mall Gazette*, after referring in a leading article to the correspondence in the *Daily Telegraph* on the merits and demerits of the hospital nurse, remarks:—

“With the public at large it is safe to say that no figure is more admired than that of the ‘ministering angel’ in her demure yet pretty uniform, with her mingled air of gentleness, alertness, and efficiency. It is a calling that evokes the best emotions in countless women, giving scope for all the selfless benevolence which is the glory of their sex and their supremest virtue. It would take a very great deal of evidence indeed to convince Englishmen and Englishwomen that nurses as a class are not fully worthy of the esteem in which they are popularly held, or that their profession is not one of the most honourable products of our civilisation.”

Our contemporary considers that “criticisms are begotten perhaps more frequently of the experience undergone in private nursing homes or with nurses engaged from those institutions. It is well known that the commercial nursing home is not always too particular as to the qualifications and training of its staff, and that it is occasionally but too ready to thrust the services of an incompetent and nondescript probationer upon those who are paying liberally for what they suppose to be professional skill. It is not fair to judge of the real nurse, who has undergone an arduous preparation for her life’s work, by the antics or deficiencies of some to whom it is scarcely uncharitable to give the name of counterfeit.”

“But, making all allowances for this complication, we believe that those best acquainted with the subject would admit that there is room for improvement in the genuine finished article, fully trained and certificated.”

It considers that the remedy, in the main, “lies in securing for the hospitals a larger class from whom they may select the fittest candidates for a noble and humane service. And this can only be accomplished by mitigating the conditions which now exclude a large number of women well qualified by instinct, disposition, and upbringing to wait upon the pains and needs of sickness. It would be unjust to lump all institutions together in a railing accusation. But it is perfectly safe to say that the treatment accorded to the nurse in many hospitals is neither accordant with their mission of mercy nor creditable to the philanthropists and public men who figure on their boards. She is often worked beyond all reasonable elasticity of nerve and fibre. In few professions are there so many

failures because of physical breakdown in the initial stages. It is a wanton waste of capacity and a frustration of all true method to confuse the duties of a nurse with those of a charwoman, and it militates against efficiency—to put it on no higher ground—when exiguous pay is accompanied by meagre food and indifference to recreation. So long as nurses are sweated—the word is in some cases not a bit too strong—in the name of charity, so long will there be disappointments in store for those who are eager to reverence one of the most beautiful and most truly consecrated of woman’s callings.”

One more word seems necessary: hard conditions of service are not the principal hindrance to girls of the right stamp who desire to adopt nursing as a calling. But they find little to attract them in a profession the genuine members of which are travestied by the counterfeits for whose misdoings they are held responsible as the public has no adequate means of differentiating between the two. The establishment of a Governing Body, under State Authority, to regulate the qualifications of trained nurses, and to provide for their registration, is essential if well-educated candidates, in sufficient numbers, are to be attracted to the nursing profession.

The *Daily Telegraph* of August 22nd publishes the following statement:—

We have received a communication from a solicitor acting on behalf of the matron and nurses of a nursing home in a suburb of London calling our attention to the fact that the letter appearing in our issue of the 12th inst., under the name of “Sold,” constituted an unwarranted attack on his clients; that the complaints set out in the letter were void of all foundation, or were so exaggerated as to constitute a serious libel, and that, owing to certain details given, the letter referred to his clients in such a manner as to identify them locally.

The insertion of the letter has, we have been given to understand, inflicted serious pain and annoyance upon the matron and nurses in question, as well as loss, pecuniary and otherwise, to the business carried on by them.

We, therefore, take this opportunity of expressing our unqualified regret that our columns should have been used in this way, and that any annoyance should have been caused.

We published the letter in good faith, without any idea or means of ascertaining the truth or otherwise of the complaints in same, but solely upon the strength of the respectability of the writer as evidenced by the card accompanying it.

It will be remembered that the correspondence which has been proceeding in our contemporary on “The Noisy Nurse” opened with “Sold’s” letter.

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