

Yes, one looks on and wonders and asks, Was it wise to spend one's small reserve of health and strength on work not demanded of us and not paid for?

Was it politic to give up our spare moments to nurses in trouble, nurses in the sick room to whom (one knew it by instinct) a sight of "Matron" would act as a better tonic than any doctor's prescription.

Was it necessary to allow the private nurse to unburden herself on her return from a trying case, when the only duty required of you, as her Superintendent, was to count the fees and to receive a sealed report of her conduct?

And to descend to a more mundane plane, but to my mind, still a plane of "ideals," why have spent so much time and forethought on catering for working women, why have planned and contrived varied diets and seasonable food for one's nurses, when a weekly routine of alternate beef and mutton, milk puddings and tarts satisfied the standard of the House Committee?

We may ask why? But, would we wish them different, these Matrons who are passing from our ranks?

No! a thousand times No.

"Women with ideals" are the salt of the earth!

To the outside public, "The Matron has broken down," and is "shelved"; but the spirit of self-sacrifice that inspired her work still lingers round the building and hovers over the spot where she held sway; and has left its mark on those who held communion with her, inside those walls.

"The letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life."

To those women trained under her, their "Matron with ideals" will ever be a guiding spirit, permeating their lives and sanctifying their calling.

"Every noble life leaves the fibre of itself interwoven for ever in the work of the world."

Bishop Trench.

Tunbridge Wells.

ANNIE HULME.

DEAR MADAM,—I am pleased to see the subject of the overstrain of Matrons brought up for discussion; I have no doubt that the overwork is much worse in smaller institutions, than the large ones, because there is too often no one to take the Matron's place in any part of her skilled work. Speaking for myself, my Matron years were harder than any other part of my career, often eighteen hours a day, and disturbed nights, and *two* weeks' holiday, causing failure of health, and spirit time after time; I loved my hospital, but after eight and a-half years was asked to leave. In four years four Matrons have held office there; one leaving on the ambulance, hopelessly ill, the others breaking down. It took me three years to recover. That is only one "charity." I know of one where the Matron has died suddenly; exhausted by overwork.

The lay committees are the bane of Matrons; the "clergy and their ladies" are so often hard, unsympathetic, undermining the great work of skilled nursing, by providing *only* raw probationers, or very imperfectly trained nurses, who will not be taught. Yet the Matrons must ever strain higher, and have to make bricks without straw.

I consider doctors are much to blame for it; for fear of offending their rich patients on the committee they will not stand by the Matrons, nor insist on the best workers, and their being properly paid and having sufficient holidays. I have worked over twenty years, and half that time as Matron. I have suffered, and seen others suffer too. No committee has the right to break a nurse's health for "charity."

Yours faithfully,

SQUEEZED ORANGE.

[This lady's work was for the most part in a Cottage Hospital, where the overstrain of Matrons is often a very real evil. Several letters on this subject are held over for want of space.—ED.]

THE CRUEL STEEL TRAP.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

MADAM,—With regard to the hideous cruelty that is rife in many parts of the country in connection with rabbit-trapping, may I point out that trapping on the open ground, as generally practised, is absolutely illegal, both under the Ground Game Act and the latest amended Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, but it is carried on with impunity. It is clearly stated that traps cannot be set on the open ground, or in any place where they are likely to injure birds or animals (other than "vermin") for which they are not intended; this proviso is openly ignored and the destruction of bird and animal life, including cats and dogs, is enormous.

Rabbits can be got rid of without these gins. In many parts of England they are unknown, and they are both an antiquated and lazy way of dealing with the pest.

There is a difficulty under the Act with regard to police entering private land, and they are thereby unable to prosecute; but if the many people who are interested in the prevention of cruelty to animals would move in the matter; that part of the Act could be amended; or, better still, the use of these instruments of torture—*i.e.*, steel toothed traps, which are a disgrace to humanity—be made illegal.

Yours faithfully,

FIGHT THE WRONG.

OUR PRIZE COMPETITIONS.

July 19th.—Enumerate the different means of reducing fever.

July 26th.—How would you feed, and what means would you take to relieve a patient with an acute attack of indigestion?

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