

[January 1st, 1891.]

Supplement to the Nursing Record.

THE LONDON HOSPITAL SCANDALS:

BEING STATEMENTS TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS,
EXTRACTS FROM THE BLUE BOOK,
AND THE REPORT OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE OF THE LONDON HOSPITAL.

IT has become our duty, in the interests of the sick, and on behalf of Nurses, to adopt a course of action which we have hoped against hope might have been rendered unnecessary. For some years it has been well-known in professional circles that the Nursing Department of the London Hospital was in a state of great inefficiency, and that practices were permitted there which would not be tolerated, for a moment, at any well-managed Institution. The London Hospital is the largest in the Kingdom. It has an enormous poor population around it, and its pecuniary necessities are correspondingly great. It has been the fear of causing any check to the subscriptions of the benevolent which has sealed our mouths, and those of many others who have been equally well aware of circumstances which have been recently brought before the public. Several ladies and gentlemen made, in July last, charges against the Nursing Department of the Hospital, before the Select Committee of the House of Lords then investigating the management of Metropolitan Hospitals. Still more damaging facts were elicited from witnesses examined on behalf of the Hospital. All the evidence is printed in the Blue Book, which can be obtained from Messrs. Eyre and Spottiswoode, or through any bookseller. The numbers given below are those of the questions and answers, in the Blue Book, referred to, in order that anyone can verify the entire accuracy of our statements. We, and many others, earnestly hoped that the authorities of the London Hospital would have only desired that the truth should be known; would have fully and openly investigated every charge, and have either disproved them or instituted every necessary reform. The Hospital then would have benefited immeasurably by the criticism which it had received.

What has happened, however, has unhappily been widely different. The Committee, or the ruling spirits amongst its number, first adopted abuse as a substitute for argument; and instead of denying the grave charges—which, indeed, was impossible—asserted that they were simply made in order to damage the Hospital—a defence so ridiculous that it carried its own condemnation

on its face, but which was still repeated again and again as though it were considered to be better than none. The Lords' Committee rose at the beginning of August, and the House Committee of the London Hospital, without seeking for any further testimony or corroboration from the complainants, asked the Governors at the Quarterly Court, held on September 3rd, for their continued approval and support. Although it was strongly urged that the Governors could not fairly be expected to adjudicate in the dark, nor until the whole evidence as contained in the then forthcoming Blue-Book was before them, the matter was pressed to a division. Those of the Committee present voted *en bloc* for their own justification, and numerically gained an empty vote of confidence. This proceeding, however, was too much for some of our contemporaries, and the public disapproval which was exhibited led the Committee to appoint three of their number to "report" upon part of the charges advanced against the Hospital. These three gentlemen were appointed in the middle of October. At the end of November they vouchsafed an audience of about an hour in length to Mr. and Mrs. HUNTER, Mr. and Miss YATMAN; but as far as we can learn, saw no other of the complainants, nor made any inquiry of former or present officials of old standing, outside the Nursing department. In fact, if there was any inquiry at all it must have been of the most one-sided character. Then we arrive at the Quarterly Court of Governors, held on December 3rd. So many of our contemporaries have described the disgraceful scene which was then enacted, that we need only recall the fact that Mrs. HUNTER, who has so courageously and temperately championed the cause of Nurses, and demanded bare justice for the sick poor and the public at large, was only permitted to say a few words amidst constant and cowardly interruptions, while every other Governor who attempted to criticise the management of the Nursing department was literally howled down. On the other hand, the virulent remarks in which certain members of the Committee indulged were applauded by the obedient clique. This attempt apparently to

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