

their first and second years for private cases, at the same charges for which the sister institutions at St. Bartholomew's, Guy's, University College, and the Middlesex supply a three years' certificated Nurse, the public might have respected its honesty, but it certainly would not have patronised its policy. It was denied that there have ever been any complaints made of these Private Nurses' want of skill (Q. 6,624-5). The Committee now reports that there have been such in seven cases, and yet everyone knows how difficult it is for the laity to discriminate in professional matters, and how loth also in times of dangerous illness relatives and friends are to make complaints, in writing, which are difficult to substantiate. But in any case our contention is very simple. We insist that the London Hospital has no right to deceive the public by supplying an inferior article to that promised, asked, and paid for. It is no excuse to plead that presumably no harm has resulted. Deceit is none the less deceit because the deceived person can afford the resulting loss. Wrong is enhanced when life and death are in the balance. The deceit is worst when done under the specious cloak of Charity.

#### II.—THE LONDON HOSPITAL OVERWORKS AND UNDERFEEDS ITS NURSES.

Nursing is hard and responsible work. But it need not be made ruinous to the health, if not to the life, of the worker. We deem it no excuse to urge that other Institutions treat their Nurses as badly, and indeed we do not believe it. The London Hospital gives its Probationers a week's holiday at the end of every six months, so that in their two years' service they only get three week's rest. It is hardly credible, but even this meagre week is clipped at each end. The Probationers have to come on duty on the first day, and be back early in the evening of the seventh. The hours of work average twelve per diem, and for every day in the week. Those who contend that men should not work longer than forty-eight hours a week, will probably agree with us that eighty-four hours for a woman, is excessive, and especially when this has to be performed in a vitiated atmosphere.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the Hospital authorities are compelled to admit that their Nurses are overworked. One of them went so far as to say that they were "obviously overworked." (Q. 7,720.) They are equally obviously under-fed. It is admitted by the Hospital authorities that this was the case before 1886, and this is accounted for by the supervision of the Nurses' dietary having been kept until that year out of the Matron's hands. Consequently there were continual complaints made by the Nurses to the Matron and religiously forwarded on, with

complaints from herself, to the House Committee. In 1886 the full control of the housekeeping of the Nursing Home was entrusted to the Matron. Seeing that all complaints must go through her, the Committee was undoubtedly wise in its generation in making that lady entirely responsible for the department. The curious facts, however, are that although witness after witness before the Lords' Committee testified that since 1886 the food has constantly been bad in quality, and made worse in the cooking, yet the Committee is certain there can be no ground for complaint—because it has received so few from the Matron. In 1885 the cost of the Nurses' food was £4,730. In 1889, for a considerably increased staff, it had fallen to £4,683 (vide Annual Report, p. 31). The Matron asserted that the necessary cost of food for each Sister was 11s. 3½d. a week, and for each Nurse 8s. 11½d. a week. (Q. 6,649.) Figures these which hardly suggest a nourishing and sufficient diet. *But the amount actually expended in 1889, divided by the number of the entire staff, shows that the average cost for Sisters and Nurses together only amounted in that year to 7s. 10d. per head per week.* The Committee, at first, denied that there could possibly be any fault found with the Nurses' food. Its Report (p. 3) now reveals quite incidentally that it has recently "found it necessary to cancel the contract for the supply of meat which had just been made with a new contractor." So that it appears that, despite the denial, "a new contractor" had been found to be a necessity since the Lords' Committee held its inquiry. We draw attention to this significant fact as one proof, not only of the value to be attached to the wholesale denials of the Committee, but also of one improvement already effected by the publicity given to this matter. We now pass on to consider the utterly unjustifiable manner in which the Probationers have been sweated. Upon entering, they sign an agreement to remain for two years in the service of the Hospital, and to work for a salary of £12 the first year and £20 the second, on condition that the Hospital on its side shall provide them for that period with board and lodging, and give them systematic instruction in the art of Nursing in its Wards.

It now appears that the Hospital deliberately breaks its bond—as deliberately deceives the Probationer as it deceives the public, by interrupting her training, and sending her out to nurse the richer classes in private houses, to learn what she can at their expense, while they are called upon to save the Hospital the cost of her keep, and pay it besides at the rate of £80 to £110 a year, according to the nature of the case. There is more than one instance known in which the

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