

nurses of fifty, or more, from I do not know where, who are little more than walking corpses; they have lost the alertness and all the interest in the world in general that other women have, and yet they possess the capacity for pain and worry and despair. Nobody wants them, and they do not understand that their very lifelessness precludes them from finding work at the present time. These are they who refused to listen to the voices in the wilderness thirty years ago, and it is they whom you have to thank that *you* are met with the greatest crisis that has ever arisen for you. See to it that you do not adopt a similar responsibility to the future.

Referring to the argument that nurses are too weary with long hours to take an interest in their own affairs, Miss Macdonald agreed, and said:—In this connection I am going to make a statement as regards which I fear you will not agree with me. I wish that the word "trained" could be deleted from the nurses' vocabulary. It is a word which is taken far too literally and therefore, there arise many abuses. Training is supposed to comprise education, but it only does so in so far as it may chance, in each individual case, to suit the convenience of the hospitals, and, for the rest, the word "training" simply means moulding the nurse's mind, habits and character to the form likely to prove useful to the hospital—(cheers and hisses)—to make her part of what is really hospital machinery, nothing more or less. Loyalty to your profession is construed to mean "Dae what you're bidden." (Pardon my using the Scotch vernacular, it is more expressive of what I mean.) Vocation means serfdom, and the qualification most likely to bring promotion to the nurse is the ability to understand the mind of the woman above her, and to pander to it. (Loud applause.)

Further, I would remind you of a well-known psychological fact—no person with any real mentality, with any originality or real intellect, can continue long hours of routine work. It is this system of long hours of routine—hours that *no* labouring man would face—that has been responsible for driving out the mentality, the power of judgment, the power of independent thought and self-determination in the nurses.

DANGER No. 2.

Another grave danger to the nurses is the Chairman of the V.A.D.s. He is also Chairman of the College of Nursing, Ltd., and I do contend that experience has taught us, what many of us—myself included—might have been astute enough to perceive from the beginning, that he, no more than any other, can serve two masters. He is getting the nurses safely herded into his employers' combine, and, while he is supplying them with all sorts of soporifics, principally promises and fine words about Sister Tutors, that bring *you* nothing at all, he is now, as you can see from the newspapers week after week, organising his V.A.D.s (you nurses are only his step-children) into the tuberculosis work,

the work of combating venereal disease, and into every branch of the wide field of health work. How the Matrons can sit benignly smiling upon him while he sells the nurses' birthright I cannot understand. I think my colleague will deal with this matter from its economic aspect, but there is another point of view which is not less important. There are very few women who can go on nursing all their lives or, at least, not at the present working hours. Any one who has used her observation at all knows that the patients draw their vitality from the nurses. It is not merely the tangible means of sustaining life that they supply, but they suck all that higher, finer vitality of their nature. Even a worried, anxious person always with you does the same. No one would quarrel with this within limits. Not if you had, as you should have, holidays equal, at least, in length and frequency to those of the teaching profession. But, as things are at present, one of two things is bound to happen: (1) The nurse obsessed with the spirit of sacrifice or, perhaps, some less worthy but probably equally urgent motive, puts no limit to the work and strain which she is prepared to endure, and her health fails; or (2) she subconsciously rears up her own defences, becomes less frankly self-sacrificing, less sympathetic, and sometimes, indeed, irritable, so that her character fails as a nurse, yet it is only the reaction of overstrain.

Now I come to my point. If you are going to give the finest branch of nursing—preventive nursing—very largely to the half nurses, you chain the nurses, for life, into crowded and confined spheres, where the very nature of the work ensures to the majority premature disability and dependence.

DANGER No. 3.

A third danger is that nearly every large hospital has its private staff. The hospitals are simply training the nurses, and grasping, as far as they dare, the income arising from their labours. They are taking advantage of their position as the Alma Mater of the medical man, and of certain facilities which they possess, to spread out their tentacles and absorb the private nursing for themselves—to absorb the independence of a great body of workers. Shakespeare says, in effect, "My labour is my life, therefore, who takes my labour takes my life." The hospitals are taking far more than their legitimate share of the nurses' lives.

DANGER No. 4.

Another very grave danger to the nurses is the Nation's Fund for Nurses, to collect which the indigent nurse has been used as the bait. Large sums of money at the disposal of one company may be a great power for good or evil, and long ago I said that it would be a very grim irony, if the nation's debt of gratitude to the nurses were used to forge their fetters. I leave you to judge whether or not my forebodings have been justified. Anyhow, it enabled the chairman of the V.A.D.s, and the College of Nursing, Ltd.,

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