

Amateur Nurses.

BY LINA MOLLETT.

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IN one sense—in the best sense of the word—it will be impossible for professional or non-professional women to be anything but sham Christians, unless they are amateur Nurses. An *amateur*, my dictionary tells me, is one "who cultivates any study or art from attachment," or, I suppose, because he or she *loves* it. To *nurse*, that same useful volume informs me is "to cherish or tend." When women cease to love "to cherish or tend," it will be a sad day for them and the world.

The statement that a woman is born to make a pet of something, or somebody, is perhaps hackneyed to a degree; her instinctive tendency to make a deity of harmony, and lead beings that are out of harmony (or unhappy) back to her shrine, has been dwelt upon by wiser pens than mine. As for praising her for doing what she likes, and what is natural to her, that is what Mark Twain with graphic word-painting would describe as "soul-butter."

The popular feeling against the abnormal monsters who figured as chief actresses in the late cases of cruelty to children found expression in wrathful outbursts of indignant newspaper correspondents, and in multitudinous arguments on the pedagogical value of punishments, in which the absurdity of trying to enforce the beauty of goodness on a baby mind by terrifying it has been freely censured.

The opinion of an American lady, whose well-ordered house is the admiration of her acquaintances, is well worth giving a thought to. "Make friends and confidants of your children," this lady advises; "don't expect human cherubs, or see wickedness in every fit of crossness. We are often unreasonable and irritable ourselves, and all the better for a *good wholesome letting alone*. Never neglect children, but exercise all possible tact in giving them a fair share of that treasure we value so highly ourselves—freedom of action! Let them learn to appreciate, by unspoken influence rather than argument, the restraint of that 'Perfect Law of Liberty' which forms the foundation of reasonable happiness."

It has frequently and seriously been asserted that the so-called "higher education of women" would result in lowering their value as house-

keepers and Nurses, and that the spread of University training for girls would end in making the world less comfortable. If it be true that broader studies than those the kitchen-range and tapestry-frame afford, blunt the edge of sympathy, and harden the heart; if dwelling on what the poet calls "the harmony of greater souls," makes us tactless: if indeed we are being educated into forgetting we were born to be "amateur Nurses" whenever and wherever we can "nurse" suffering, sorrow, and despair back to peace and life, then indeed our volumes of Goethe, Emerson, Hume, and Hugh Miller, and many others, had better be built into one vast pyre, round which rescued man may dance rejoicing!

That the schools which systematically taught the "prettiness" of helplessness, the charm of simplicity, and the value of social accomplishments *versus* acquirements, *did* turn out a charming type of womanhood, there is no doubt. Many of us may possess a portrait of some adorable young great-grandmother or grandmother, whose heavenly smile of peace and joy carries off some family feature to perfection, and makes comparison with descendants of a more restive age, odious. Guarded by a palisade of guileless optimism, gentlewomen of those times must have resembled Eve before she partook of the fateful apple of knowledge, that introduced her to "*les realites de la vie*."

Outside the palisade, average humanity was having rather a bad time of it. Less favoured women and children were dying living deaths in factories, cheap schools, prisons, workhouses, and mines, that were a mockery on our creed of universal brotherhood, established as a "State religion." Civilised heathen of the time of Nero and Diocletianus tortured the Christians to death by fire and stake "in the name of the gods and of the emperor." Civilised Christians of recent centuries revenged themselves on the heathen in their midst by inflicting more lingering and subtle tortures, such as result from slow starvation, constant exposure to cold, foul air, dirt, and darkness, "in the name of civilisation!"

When Elizabeth Browning raised the "Cry of the Children," that echoed and re-echoed throughout England, children of four or five were imprisoned in coal mines, with responsible duties and cares on their innocent baby shoulders, that, combined with their gloomy underground surroundings, afforded an education worthy of the invention of demons. Mrs. Montagu's ill-chosen correction was lamb-like in comparison!

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