

Nursing Echoes.

* * * *All communications must be duly authenticated with name and address, not for publication, but as evidence of good faith.*



THE *Evening News and Post* continues its crusade for Hospital Reform. On the 27th inst., it published a letter from Mr. H. S. Alexander, concerning the London Hospital, which is unfortunately too long for me to find space for more than the following paragraphs. It is very much to the point, and proves conclusively that the public is taking a much keener interest in the London Hospital Scandals than the Committee of that Institution realizes. Mr. ALEXANDER says:—

“Regarding your most interesting and valuable series of articles on the above subject, taking advantage of your kind permission to use your columns, I must remark that is certainly astonishing that your paper should be practically the only one to deal with the report of the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Metropolitan Hospitals; &c. (Spottiswoode’s, 1892), with anything approaching to thoroughness, notwithstanding the immense sums of what is really, as you remark, public money, and the great interests involved. Probably the reason is that the report of the committee, even considering the evidence given, is such a remarkable specimen—one might almost say, such a model—of dignified feebleness, as hardly to be worth detailed criticism. Perhaps, also, the fact of its being so evident that nothing approaching to the real, or I should more correctly say, the whole truth, came out in the evidence of either the witnesses who were called or those who volunteered, contributed to this singular apathy. In this and all similar inquiries however well conducted, one must take into consideration the fact that the fear of direct, or indirect consequences, and alas! often too, of what Voltaire describes as gratitude, namely a lively sense of favours to come, will conceal part if not the whole truth. But to those who are interested in this urgent question of Hospital reform, and who take the trouble to read between the lines, much that calls for immediate remedy may be gathered from the report alone, without wading through the, to laymen, somewhat heavy amount of evidence given before the Select Committee.”

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“Now, for what purpose was the inquiry instituted? To get at the truth, the whole truth, regarding the management of the Metropolitan Hospitals, &c.: and yet, here we have a gentleman giving evidence on behalf of the largest and most important Hospital in the metropolis, for whose connection with a grave scandal relative to the management of that Hospital no better apology can be offered (as regards clearing himself from any blame) than the fact that he did not (as was his duty) say all he knew to clear himself at the inquiry. ‘Looker-On’ makes a sorry apologist, and if I was not aware that he, if anyone, ought to know the details of the internal management of the London Hospital, I should certainly feel inclined to think that his letter was a practical joke. What stopped Mr. Nixon (and the others referred to) from telling the whole and not the partial truth at the Lords’ inquiry, as

“Looker-On” insinuates they did? Surely such a man as Mr. Nixon would not close his mouth for fear of after consequences. If in the army a doctor usurped the authority of the commander of his regiment, and this led to a scandal (I do not think it would be as long before it did, as in the case of the London Hospital) would the War Office accept as an excuse that the commander’s loyalty to either his comrades or his regiment had prevented his taking any action in the matter? Common sense would seem to urge that it was just the commander’s loyalty which ought to have made him remedy the abuse, not countenance it. Mr. Nixon’s loyalty should have been to the public by whose subscriptions the hospital is maintained.

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THE *Charity Record* also contains correspondence last week freely criticising the management of the Nursing Department of the London Hospital. “A Hospital Secretary” in an impartial manner puts the case into a nutshell as follows:—

“The governors would, I believe, act wisely in adopting and giving effect to the suggestions of the Lords’ Committee, at any rate so far as they affect the nursing arrangements. Their Lordships took an infinity of trouble to arrive at right conclusions in these matters, and if they have erred at all it is on the side of leniency to the Nurses, due doubtless to the fact that the Committee was composed entirely of gentlemen, and was not a hybrid body like most Hospital Committees are. In matters of this kind it is much safer to listen to a body of gentlemen than to a Matron, however clever and good she may be. To err is human, and my experience is that Matrons are very human. I have known nearly a dozen of them during the past 20 years, and although I have invariably found them anxious to do the right thing and to be just to their Nurses and servants, yet I have frequently noticed that they allowed their angry passions to rise unnecessarily, and that when their ‘danders’ were up the Nurses and servants did not always obtain justice.

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Therefore, I heartily agree with the Lords’ opinion that “no absolute power ought to be given to any Matron;” and in the interest of the London Hospital I would strongly urge that no Nurse or servant should be dismissed or certificate or character withheld till the committee were satisfied that full justice had been done. I believe a great deal of the troubles at the London has arisen from the unfortunate fact that the Matron has had a great deal too much power, and there is a feeling abroad that the committee have paid a great deal too much attention to her and to her opinions. She may be, and probably is, a very capable woman, but that does not in my opinion justify the London Hospital Committee in surrendering their judgment to her dictates, nor does it shift their responsibility. In saying this I have no personal feeling whatever, and I make these remarks as an old friend of the London Hospital anxious that it should continue its great work.

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The *Charity Record* states that:—

“Mr. W. G. Bunn, secretary of the Hospital Saturday Fund, recently presided at a conference of members of Friendly Societies in South London at the Women’s University Settlement, Nelson Square, Southwark, held to discuss the possibility of obtaining the co-operation of the Friendly Societies in aid of the branch of the Metropolitan and National Nursing Association about to be established in the district. There were also present influential representatives of the Foresters, Odd-fellows, Shepherds, and Hearts of Oak Societies. Miss Hughes, Superintendent of the Association, gave a graphic account of a typical day’s work of a District Nurse.”

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