

good name and honour, be only its very best Nurses.

Now the charges against the London Hospital in the first place come to this—that the workers in the Wards are unable to perform duties allotted to them efficiently, some through ignorance, others from overwork. The proofs advanced to support this serious allegation are, that an extraordinary number of paying Probationers are admitted for terms of three or six months, and are continually passing through the Hospital. The fact is quoted from the Annual Report, for example, that last year no less than one thousand eight hundred pounds was received from such would-be learners. In other words, as each pays a guinea a week, there must always be at least thirty paying Probationers in the Wards of the London Hospital. It needs no stretch of imagination or technical knowledge to realise what this means. Thirty young ladies, more or less hopelessly ignorant of the very rudiments of Nursing knowledge, set to nurse the sick. Every single one of them has to be watched lest she commits some, perhaps irreparable, mistake. Every one of the thirty has to be shown how to do this, and how not to do that, day after day, week after week, for three weary months. Then, just as she is beginning to become a help rather than a hindrance, her time expires, she departs to pose amongst her friends and the public as a Hospital Nurse, and some other fresh face appears in her place, and all the wearing anxiety, and the weary teaching, has to begin over again. Do professional people who have not been on such a treadmill realise, even dimly, the harrassing anxiety which such ignorant assistants cause to the Sister of the Ward? No layman can possibly understand what the strain is. Never to know, from hour to hour, what the new Probationer will do; whether she may not cheerfully help the aneurism case out of bed; or, in sheer commiseration, share a basket of strawberries with the typhoid patient; never to go out of the Ward without a haunting conviction that "something will happen" before she returns, is not the way to maintain intact the Sister's mental and bodily powers. And it is equally hard and unfair upon the Staff Nurse to give her a worse than useless helper, and equally grinding and depressing for her to know that it is like rolling a ball up the side of a precipice to teach each successive Probationer what to avoid and what to do. Placing altogether aside the increased amount of hard work which inefficient help throws upon the skilled worker's shoulders. No one can deny that a system which floods the Wards with a kaleidoscopic procession of the short term paying Probationers is fraught with the very gravest dangers to the patients. But when these

women are admitted in such numbers as necessarily—because the bed accommodation is of course only limited—to prevent the admission of regular workers who would stay their two or three years, and gradually become useful and trustworthy, the evil is intensified beyond measure. Now this is in all conscience bad enough, but worse remains, because it is solemnly asserted that the best of the regular Probationers, after a few months' training, and just therefore as they are beginning to be useful, are frequently sent out to nurse the richer classes outside the Hospital. We think it is only right that we should add that we ourselves can corroborate this fact.

Many months ago certain circumstances happened which drew our attention to this matter, and we had a large amount of evidence placed at our disposal. The names of *sixteen* Probationers who had thus been sent out as fully trained Nurses to the personal knowledge of our informant were given to us, and we hold them, and other evidence, now in our possession. We think also that it is only right to add that, realising the importance of these facts as showing the necessity of Registration to protect the public from fraudulent imposition, we brought them to the knowledge of the managers of the British Nurses' Association. In reply we were strongly urged not to make our facts public, for fear of causing damage to the London Hospital, and were informed that the success of Registration was quite assured without such assistance. We are extremely glad that we accepted the advice given to us. But now the matter has been made public our hands are free, and we can corroborate beyond the shadow of a doubt this part of the evidence. We shall refer to this at further length upon another occasion, and at present only point out the inevitable result of thus depleting the Wards of those who have just learnt sufficient to make them useful *when under supervision*, although of course their inexperience makes them quite unfit to take charge of a private patient where they have no one to overlook, assist, or advise them in the nursing.

It is asserted that uncertificated and untrained women are appointed, through favouritism, Sisters of Wards, in which position of course their inexperience, and therefore their sheer inability to guide their Staff Nurses, or to train their Probationers, throws the whole organization inevitably into confusion. This then in brief is the case which has been made out in support of the first charge—that the patients are sacrificed in the struggle to secure large receipts from the Nurse pupils. Instances and proofs are advanced, but these we must defer to another occasion to consider.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)