

To pass on, however, and to consider the manner in which the patients are dealt with in the largest Hospital in the kingdom, so many distinct and incidental facts are given in the Blue Book that we can only marvel at the apparent indifference to the sufferings of the sick poor thus revealed by the Committee of the London Hospital; for in its Report it calmly states that "it is not seriously alleged that in consequence of overwork the patients suffer." Yet we hear of a patient badly burnt by a Sister with an overheated water tin (Q. 5,898), and that there had been "two or three previous cases of burns in the Ward" (Q. 5,903); that in order to get through the necessary work the adult patients have to be aroused and washed by *four o'clock* in the morning, while in the Children's Ward this work is "begun even earlier" (Q. 4,877). "Gentle Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," seems to be at a discount amongst the patients. Then we are told of the mixing of the patients' medicines "sometimes caused by hurry and overwork" (Q. 4,979). Then we are told of "hurried dressings causing pain," and the patients pitifully pleading, "Do not be in such a hurry, Nurse; you hurt me" (Q. 4,983-4); of a patient obliged to be left unconscious after chloroform, and who fell out of bed (Q. 5,191); of the house surgeon having to leave another patient on whom he was operating to lift the first case back into bed (Q. 5,193-4); of a patient having to be tied down in bed so as not to stop the Ward work (Q. 5,196); of recovery retarded by clumsy attendance (Q. 4,753-4).

But what will, perhaps, appeal more keenly to the public heart and conscience is the simple narration of Miss YATMAN (Q. 4,902). "Do you know," she was asked by Lord SANDHURST, "of any cases in the Children's Ward that you spoke of, with 53 cases, of great inconvenience occurring to the children from the insufficiency of the Nursing?" And her answer was: "Very often the children could not be attended to as they should. If they were crying and requiring attention you could not give it. In one case I remember a child who had had its eye excised crying bitterly all night; when it was taken in the Nurse's arms it stopped; of course the crying inflamed the eye. Then on another occasion I remember there were two children who had had operations for hare-lip performed, and that is a case in which it is very important that the child should not cry. These children did cry unless they were walked about with. The Nurse spent a great part of the night in walking about with them, and the work, of course, of the Ward was thrown back by this. The Probationer next morning told me that the Sister said: 'Then,

Nurse, they must cry,' as there was no special Nurse sent. A special Nurse was sent for a few hours the next night, because the Night Sister told me she had said it was impossible to do without; but this was only continued for about two nights." We have no space for more, but we feel sure that few unprejudiced people will contend that such Nursing arrangements as these justify the unqualified praise and satisfaction expressed by the Staff of the Hospital with the manner in which their patients are tended.

V.—"JUSTICE" AT THE LONDON HOSPITAL. The Bye-Law originally provided that no Probationer should be sent away from the Hospital except by the sanction of the Committee. It now stands that the Matron has absolutely the power of dismissal (Q. 7,139). But to "prevent a person considering that she has been turned off by the Matron without any right of appeal" (Q. 7,208), the Committee insert in the Probationer's agreement that she may appeal to the Committee if dismissed (Q. 7,134). The regular Probationers, on entering, sign an agreement binding themselves to serve the Hospital for the full term of two years. If discharged before that time they receive no certificate of efficiency; they have lost their time, and have to begin all over again, somewhere else, if they wish to hold any position as skilled Nurses; and if they cannot get a good reference from the Matron, probably no other Hospital will admit them. If they make any complaint and draw any attention to their case, they certainly would not receive the reference, and their Hospital careers would be practically ended. Every day it grows more difficult for uncertificated Nurses to obtain good work. They must gain their certificate or look forward to sinking lower and lower in the nursing scale. If dismissed, therefore, their one object is to get away quickly and quietly. It is not wonderful therefore that the Committee "has never had an appeal" (Q. 7,134). No wonder that one noble Lord said that the appeal "must be absolutely a farce" (Q. 7,208), because it was calmly admitted that if anyone did appeal, only the Matron's word would be taken (Q. 7,053). Not one in a thousand would have the moral courage nor the strong friend possessed by Miss Raymond. She was discharged by the Matron at the end of her first year, and told she was "quite unfit to become a Nurse" (Q. 5,936). A friend wrote on her behalf to the Matron, asking for an explanation, and received a "rude reply" (Q. 5,937). The friend wrote that he would bring the matter before the Committee, and the Matron hurriedly withdrew the sentence of dismissal. Miss Raymond remained for another year, and received her certificate as a thoroughly competent Nurse.

*previous page*

*next page*