

Lady nurses for the sick poor in our London workhouses : report of proceedings at the Strand Union Board of Guardians, September 4, 1866 / from the short hand notes of John While ; with an appendix.

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Publication/Creation

London : N. Trübner, 1866.

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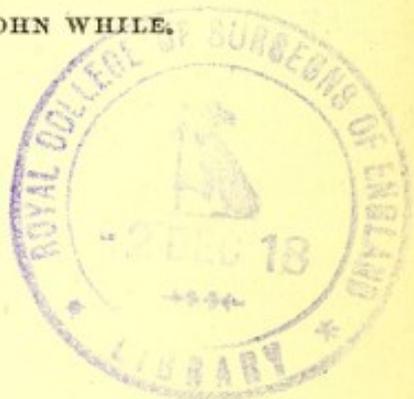
LADY NURSES
FOR
THE SICK POOR
IN OUR
LONDON WORKHOUSES.

Report of Proceedings

AT THE
STRAND UNION BOARD OF GUARDIANS,
SEPTEMBER 4, 1866.

FROM THE SHORT HAND NOTES OF MR. JOHN WHILE.

WITH AN APPENDIX.



LONDON:
N. TRÜBNER & CO., 60, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1866.

“ With all the agencies, physical or moral, which can be brought to bear, we shall have to acknowledge that the exceeding imperfections of our nature form an eternal obstacle to the object for which Positivism strives, the victory of social sympathy over self-love. The subordination in one way or other, in one degree or other, of the self-regarding to the unselfish principle, the recognition that life is given us not solely or mainly for our own enjoyment, but mainly, if not solely, *for the service of others*, is and must ever remain the one primary condition of spiritual health. That it is realised seldom is obvious enough. Types are seldom realised. But let those who have seen examples of its realisation tell whether life has in those instances lost the few charms which you say belong to it. By the consent of all times and nations, Jew, Indian, Mahommedan, or Christian, religion implies the consecration of every aspect of our nature, of every vital function, to the unseen object of worship; the concentration on that object, not of thought only, not only of emotion, but also and still more essentially of action. *Orare est laborare*. ‘Pray,’ said Loyola, ‘as if nothing was to be done by work: work as if nothing was to be done by prayer.’ ”

Dr. J. H. Bridges' letter to J. S. Mill, M.P. (TRÜBNER, 1866.)

THE
NURSING OF THE SICK
IN
THE STRAND UNION WORKHOUSE.

The question of Lady Nurses for the Strand Union workhouse—the same workhouse in which the nursing was a few weeks since proved to be an utter disgrace to the name, and an intolerable wrong to the sick inmates—was brought before the Guardians of the Union at their weekly meeting on September the 4th, in a notice of motion given by Mr. John S. Storr, that he would call attention to the system of Lady Nursing at the Chorlton Union workhouse, with a view to the Board considering the expediency of accepting the gratuitous services of the Sisters of All Saints' Home, Margaret Street. Mr. WILKINSON presided, and the Metropolitan Inspectors of the Poor Law Board, Mr. Corbett and Dr. Markham, were present.

Mr. STORR, in opening the proceedings, reminded the Guardians that he had brought the subject before them at their meeting three weeks since, by moving that a committee should be appointed to confer with Miss Byron, the Lady Mother of the All Saints' Home. At the time when he did so he was not so well informed as to details as he had now taken care to be; but even then it appeared to him that the offer of these ladies to undertake gratuitously the whole nursing of the sick in their workhouse, was one which the Guardians would not be justified in refusing, and which, in fact, he thought there could not be two opinions about their thankfully accepting. As, however, the Guardians refused to adopt his then motion for a committee, he had been to see Miss Byron, and she had expressed her willingness still to undertake the charge of the sick without any expense whatever, and he had written for information to the Chorlton Union in Lancashire, stating that his object was to have every particular, especially with regard to the points on which the fears of the Guardians were before expressed, namely, with respect to the Sisters proselytising or interfering with the discipline of the house. The Guardians of the Chorlton Union, in reply, had instructed their Clerk to transmit to him the copy of a resolution passed by them in April last, to this effect:—

“That the Clerk be directed to intimate to the Mother Superior of All Saints' Home, Margaret Street, Cavendish Square, London, to Sister

Elizabeth, Superintendent Nurse, and to Sisters Helen and Martha, the present Superintendent Nurses of the workhouse and sick wards, that the Guardians cannot conclude the business of their year of office without expressing their deep sense of the obligation they owe to those ladies for the valuable services rendered by them to the sick poor of the Union."

In addition to this resolution the Clerk wrote to the Mother Superior—"I am directed by the Guardians of this [Chorlton] Union to offer you their most sincere thanks for the great service you have rendered to the sick poor in the workhouse, by sending to their aid Sisters Elizabeth and Helen. I trust you will not consider this a formal and usual compliment for services rendered; for I feel words will not express all that I know the Guardians would wish me to write. Those of the Guardians who have, with myself, seen and felt most of the great need of efficient nursing at the workhouse, feel as if we had passed out of a stormy sea into a calm and quiet haven. Since the Sisters came all difficulties have vanished, and we have all felt that the sick are sure of constant, careful and watchful attendance to all their sad necessities."

Another witness to the good effected by the Sisters wrote to the Mother Superior from the same workhouse in similar terms. He said, "All we can do will never repay you and them (the Sisters) for the sacrifice which has been made in coming down among us—where there were from four to five hundred sick, insane, &c. Fever, in all its varied forms, was rife among us, and as many as fourteen cases were admitted in one day; nurses were leaving and falling; a panic had seized the house. In the midst of this distress we appealed to you, and the Sisters were sent down. Those dear little creatures entered the wards of fever and of death, and braved all. The house took heart at their courage, the panic subsided, and many a cure has been effected. Disorder and confusion have given place to order and quiet. The house is now peaceful. Nursing is reduced to a system."

One of the Lancashire newspapers reported a meeting of the Guardians, in which Mr. Gawthorpe's speech, on proposing a vote of thanks to the Mother Superior, and Sisters Helen, Elizabeth and Martha, "for their untiring and disinterested services during the prevalence of fever in the Union," was given. He said, "If those ladies had not come forward to the rescue he was at a loss to know how the Guardians could have coped with the amount of sickness that existed in the Union a few months ago. Considering the number of nurses that had died, and the fact that the nursing had got to what he must term the 'last push,' their arrival at the Withington workhouse was most opportune. They gave their services without fee or reward, except the consciousness of doing a good act, and they had discharged their self-imposed duties with an earnestness in the midst of danger which made one almost believe they had charmed lives." Another Guardian said, "But for the example of those ladies he greatly questioned whether the whole system of nursing would not have been broken down."

These extracts bore the strongest testimony to the value set upon the services of these ladies at Manchester, and as to the point made so much of by those who were opposed to the introduction of Protestant Sisters of Mercy on religious grounds, he (Mr. Storr) would quote the words of the very Rev. the Dean of Westminster, delivered on a recent occasion at the University College. These ladies, as was well known, were the nurses at the University College Hospital, an institution distinguished for the absence of all sectarian spirit, and the Dean, speaking of them, said, "I feel certain that there is not a Churchman in the land, however fastidious and however zealous, that would not welcome, in the appliances of University College Hospital, for the moral and religious, as well as physical welfare of its patients, the fulfilment of his best aspirations." This was Dean Stanley's view, and he was one of the patrons of the All Saints' Home. It was also to be remembered that the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of London was the official visitor of the Home, and to show that the institution was completely recognised as a Protestant one, he might mention that its list of patrons had on it some of the most eminent names in the Church. When the subject was brought to the consideration of the Guardians before, there were three objections raised, which he would now endeavour to anticipate by answering. It was said, "These ladies wear long black dresses, white hoods, and carry large black crosses." It should be remembered that these ladies must wear some distinctive dress, by reason of the places into which they enter. They went into the lowest dens of London—those places which were called the "Homes of the Poor," and they could not go dressed in Hyde Park or Burlington Arcade fashion; the wretched lees of society who lived in these places had a certain amount of respect and awe for these good women which they would feel for no one else, for they recognised in them ladies who, for the love of God and their fellow-creatures, devoted their lives to works of mercy. For his part, he could not see what objection there could be found in a little black and white millinery. What did it matter if these ladies liked to have dresses of a peculiar colour and make, so long as they did so much good. The second objection was, that there would be "proselytising" in the workhouse, that the ladies would be holding up crucifixes before the eyes of the patients, and such like; but it was proved that this fear was groundless by the manner in which the ladies discharged their duties at the University College and other Hospitals, and in the Chorlton Workhouse. With regard to the third objection, that "the discipline of the house would be interfered with," he had no fear of that, the ladies interfered in nothing; they saw that the patients were properly cared for and had their medicines and diet regularly, as prescribed by the medical officer; and Mr. Thoroe, the master of their workhouse, must as a man of honour confess that any change from the system which had lately been so exposed in regard to the treatment of the sick inmates, must be a change for the better. The beneficial nature of the assistance given in the workhouse

by these ladies might be estimated in some degree, when it was considered that they would be altogether different from all other officials, paid or pauper. The master, the matron, the doctor, the chaplain, and now some of the nurses were paid, and the introduction among these of an element of a religious kind—of services given on the voluntary principle—would be a great lesson and a daily example to all in the workhouse, whether paupers or officials, for they would have before them, in these ladies, evidence of work faithfully done from the sense of duty and the love of God. He might also venture to express the hope that the elevating influence of these ladies would not be without its effect upon the Guardians themselves. With all due respect to the representatives of the Poor Law Board present, Dr. Markham and Mr. Corbett, he must say that all idea of charity and mercy had been carefully extracted from the present Poor Law system, and it was laid down that the Guardians were to give the dry law and nothing else. A person who was once, but was fortunately not now a Guardian of the Strand Union, exclaimed, at that Board not many months ago, “We are not governing an hospital; we are not administering a charity; we are dealing with the Poor Law.” All notion of charity had been squeezed out of the Poor Law, and out of the administration of it; and if so much charity could be recovered, and so much of its element drawn back again as would show that there could be such a thing as Christian kindness in the wards of our workhouses, a great stride would be made in the improvement of the whole system of poor relief, which indeed sadly needed improvement. Then again it was very desirable that there should be some one in the workhouse apart from the paid officials and the paupers, for the true condition of the house could now never be got at. The system of inspection was altogether faulty and inadequate: on the part of the Poor Law Board it had been very much neglected, one inspector being left to attend to upwards of forty London workhouses, besides schools, and a mass of secretarial duties; and on the part of the Guardians it had been merely nominal and almost a matter of form. (Interruption and cries of “question.”) He maintained that the Guardians’ inspection of the workhouse was merely a nominal inspection. It could be nothing else seeing that it only took two hours once a week, that there was no turning down of the beds, or feeling of pulses, or any proceeding like a full inspection. In fact, the Guardians did not know how to inspect the sick wards of a house so as to benefit the sick, and there was the greatest need for the presence of persons like these ladies, whose influence for the twelve hours of a day in the wards of our workhouse would be very great indeed, and would do a vast deal more good than any such inspection as they had hitherto. When he looked back upon the system of nursing in vogue at the house not twelve months ago, when the care of the sick was left to paupers who had a salary of 1s. a week and a little gin and beer—when he looked at the new system of nurses at £15 a-year, he could not but feel that there

was still room for further changes, and that what was required was this element of Sisters of Charity, whose Christ-like efforts would be appreciated by the sick paupers as the beneficent labours of holy women had been appreciated in all ages and in all civilised countries. The ladies would not interfere at all with the discipline of the house, though he believed they would in time raise its tone and character. Their position would be as a supplement to the labours of the medical officer. They would see that the patients had their medicines and stimulants, and the nursing would, under their educated and intelligent care and tender sympathy, become a system and an example to other metropolitan workhouses. Hoping the Board would hear from Mr. Corbett something with respect to the doings of these ladies in Lancashire, he (Mr. Storr) would move "That the Board should inquire into the system of Lady Nursing at the Chorlton Union workhouse, with a view of determining whether that system could not be beneficially introduced into the sick wards of the Strand Union Workhouse."

Mr. HEDGCOCK, in seconding the motion, said he did not think any Guardian could walk over the Strand workhouse without seeing the want of a more efficient nursing system than there was at present. He had heard that owing to the efforts of these ladies the nursing was carried on admirably at the Chorlton Union, and that when the other nurses—pauper and paid—fled from the approach of fever, these ladies by their courage in entering wards where contagion was imminent, and by the devotedness they showed in standing by the death-beds of those dying from contagious diseases, restored confidence, and were the means of saving many lives. He could not see why the poor of the Strand Union should suffer from insufficient nursing, when the services of these ladies could be obtained without any expense.

Mr. CORBETT said, as he had been appealed to by Mr. Storr to speak with reference to the Chorlton Union, he must say that it was quite impossible to over-estimate the great services the Sisters had rendered. Those ladies came down in the midst of panic, when no other nurses could be obtained for any consideration, and they gave their gratuitous services. From the time they came, so great was the influence they exercised, the panic greatly subsided, and order with a complete system of nursing was now permanently established under their superintendence. The Chorlton Guardians had over and over again expressed their great obligations for the services rendered by the Sisters of All Saints' Home. He might add on the part of the Sisters that there never was the slightest interference with the regulations of the workhouse, and there was no tampering with the religion of the inmates. There was however this important difference between the two places—the Chorlton was a new workhouse with plenty of room, while the Strand was an old house much cramped for room, and the practical difficulty would be in providing the ladies with lodgings in the house.

Mr. STORR explained that the ladies would not need lodgings in the house, as they would go to All Saints' Home to sleep. All they

would want, Miss Byron said, would be a small retiring room in which to take their meals.

A GUARDIAN added—And, I suppose, a servant to wait upon them.

Mr. STORR rejoined, that if they did there were plenty of women in the house.

Mr. BULL said, he could now clearly see why Archbishop Manning had last week visited their schools at Edmonton—it was to proselytise (a laugh). This endeavour to get in these ladies, was to try to get in the thin end of the wedge. He recollected an eminent man saying that there was not so much danger outside the Church as there was in the Church, and the place in Wells street was High Church.

A GUARDIAN—We don't come here to talk about theology.

Mr. BULL—But it was wanted to get in these ladies, and when once they were in, it would be wanted to bring in and pay clergymen of the Church of Rome. This was the point at issue, and it appeared to him that some Protestants were assisting, by every means in their power, the Church of Rome. He should oppose the motion upon principle. (Laughter and “hear.”)

Mr. ENNEVER supported the motion, and said he could not see how the Guardians could refuse such an offer.

The CHAIRMAN remarked that it could not be accepted now, as there was no space in the house.

Mr. STORR said Dr. Markham, who had been unable to stop any longer, had in going out expressed to him the pleasure with which he had seen it proposed that these ladies should be allowed to superintend the nursing in the workhouse; Dr. Markham further told him that, in company with Mr. Corbett, he had witnessed the labours of these ladies in St. George-in-the-East, where they had been of the utmost benefit.

Mr. CORBETT added that he had seen the ladies engaged in St. George-in-the-East during the late cholera panic, and they had laboured there in the same noble spirit and with the same good results as in Lancashire.

Mr. BALL said the workhouse was visited almost every day by a visiting society of ladies, and he thought that sufficient. These ladies were Puseyites, and for his part he could not see the least difference between that body and Roman Catholics. If these ladies were admitted, there would be a demand on the part of the Roman Catholics that the Sisters of Mercy should be admitted, and he thought the Board, as Protestants, should be very careful how they allowed this to come to pass. It was all very well to hold before them the case of the Chorlton Union, and say that house was in great distress for nurses, but there never was a calamity without people being found to go and help. He should oppose the motion.

Mr. JEFFREY said he should move as an amendment, that as the space in the house was very limited the question should be adjourned for six months.

Mr. TYRRELL, speaking as a Catholic, said he could assure the Board that his Church did not want to proselytise—people were coming in quite fast enough, and quite as fast as their Church could take them. As to those in the workhouse being proselytised by these ladies, he could say he had no fear of the Catholics being proselytised, but there were some very bad Protestants to be proselytised into good. He thought the offer, apart from all religious questions, was a good one, and the Board might easily find the little retiring room for these ladies, or the Board room, which was only used once a week, could be given up to them.

Mr. HEDGCOCK said, this was neither a Catholic nor a Protestant question. The Guardians knew that their sick had been robbed of their food and stimulants by the nurses, and had not been properly cared for, and this was an opportunity of trying a better system.

Mr. CORNISH said, the question ought not to have been brought forward, as it had been decided at a previous meeting. The Guardians had now paid nurses in abundance, and there was no necessity for the assistance of the Sisters. But the fact was religious sentiment was at the bottom of the whole question, and if these ladies were got in they would be setting about converting to Puseyism. There was quite enough religious sentiment in the house: there was a paid Chaplain, and any one who was ill had leave to see a Priest or Dissenting minister. He thought the house had arrived at something like perfection—(laughter). They had just adopted the principle of paid nurses, and let them see how it worked. The Board had no right to meddle with the new system, and to introduce these ladies was quite opposed to the principles of the Board's constituents. He was "member" for Covent Garden (a laugh), and his constituents were strongly opposed to such a course. If these ladies came in they would have to be fed.

A GUARDIAN—They wouldn't eat as much as you do.

Mr. CORNISH did not want any ungentlemanly remarks. The ladies would want to be fed and lodged, and he thought the best thing would be to reject the offer altogether.

There was here some confusion and uproar. Mr. Hedgecock wanted to rise to a point of order, and most of the other Guardians would not allow him to be heard, and the adjournment of the Board was moved. This was withdrawn on Mr. Hedgecock resuming his seat.

Mr. STORR then replied. He said he liked to see a motion opposed as Mr. Cornish had opposed this; but he had no respect for the evasive excuse with which it was opposed by some members—namely, on the ground that there was no room in the workhouse in which these ladies could take their meals. He reiterated that there had been no proper inspection of workhouses—infirmaries they should be called—while

upwards of forty such places were under the care of one Inspector, who had to spend much of his time in the Poor Law Board answering letters, and the inspection of the Guardians could be worth very little, for they had no special medical knowledge such as was requisite to make a proper inspection. The objections about the room were like the excuses a man made for not going to church on a Sunday morning—they were utter nonsense, a timid shirking of a duty that we would not recognise. Then as regards the religious side of the question; no one who knew him would accuse him of having sympathy with any sort of superstition, for he thoroughly and heartily disliked all mummery, whether of the Church of Rome or any other Church. What he wanted, however, was to see the sick poor of the Strand workhouse well nursed and tenderly cared for, and that it was abundantly proved they had not been hitherto. He wanted to be sure that they had the medicines, food, and stimulants ordered them, and that they were not cheated of these necessaries as they had been. These Christian women from motives of real Christian charity offered to watch over their sick, and take care that they had all the attention they required. He earnestly urged the Guardians not to throw away this great chance of having the highly necessary and important work of nursing well done, simply because these ladies believed a little more than they (the Guardians) believed. There was a great cry just now about "woman's work;" some would set women to printing, and others would set them to sweeping crossings; but he looked upon this nursing the sick as especially woman's work, and he wished more of the sex would give up indolence and luxury to go forth and help the poor and needy lying upon sick beds: they would then surely find, as these Sisters found, their reward in the consciousness that they were doing their duty as women and as Christians.

The amendment was then put to the show of hands. There were four held up against it, and Mr. Storr's original motion was therefore lost by a large majority.

APPENDIX.

From the PALL MALL GAZETTE, September 5th, 1866.

The Guardians of the Strand Union have postponed by a large majority a motion, that Sisters of Charity should be admitted as nurses. The motion was described as the thin end of the wedge for Roman Catholic proselytising purposes, and this sentence seems to have decided the Guardians. However, as the words of the motion were only that an inquiry should be made into the working of the Sisters at the Chorlton Union in Lancashire, during an outbreak of fever, these scruples were surely unfounded. It would be easy to ascertain what the Sisters did at Chorlton, whether they acted as nuns or as mere nurses, and whether they tried to inoculate the sick with any heterodox "ism." Mr. Corbett, the New Poor Law Inspector, bore the strongest testimony to the great good done by the Sisters in Lancashire, and some of the Guardians had sense enough to urge that the Strand Union should set its house in order. But all to no purpose.

From the STANDARD, September 6, 1866.

It has been observed by a distinguished French philanthropist, whose life was spent in visiting the poor, that the charity which gives in gold only is least deserving of the name. The truth is obvious; no one would think of placing in the same category the donor who, whilst enjoying the comforts of his luxurious house, dismisses his charity with a cheque to the Cholera Fund, and that noble band of self-devoted women who, it may be without the disbursement of a single penny, minister patiently to the wants of the suffering victims and soothe their dying moments with heroic care. Man shall not live by bread alone, nor is the most perfect ministration to his physical wants all that he requires. The deepest sorrows are not soothed by money, whilst kind looks and sympathies soften the hardest pillow, even when a cup of cold water is the only offering.

Now it appears to us a sad fact that nearly all the institutions of this rich metropolis tend to deprive the charitable donor of his chief reward. There is no opportunity of bringing him into contact with the recipients of his bounty. There are schemes without end for doing charity by proxy, and to relieve the rich from any troublesome self-sacrifice; and we pour our thousands into the coffers of a hundred institutions with a sort of general and indefinite hope that good will come, forgetting that all our goods may be given to feed the poor and that the essence of charity itself may still be wanting. Subscription lists of noble Christians are paraded in every journal, and amongst them thousands who never saw a pauper dwelling, or gave up one moment's pleasure to the welfare of the poor. They bestow their alms upon the wretched through the ordinary channels of relief, and care not how soon their liberality is known; but few there are who will give time and trouble and sympathy to the poor, which are

infinitely more valuable than gold, though far less easily bestowed. Thus charity is altered in its character, and is deprived of more than half its blessing. There is no love between the giver and the receiver. We are solicited by a thousand circulars to support an institution of which we have scarcely heard, and which we have never seen; whilst there are thousands at our very doors who need our sympathy and care. We are startled into a fit of temporary enthusiasm by the horrors of a plague of which we may be ourselves the victims, and we answer the appeals as we do those of an importunate but skilful beggar, and dispense our bounty chiefly that he may soon be gone. On the part of the giver there is no sense of personal sacrifice, of service rendered, and of benefit conferred; on the part of the receiver there is no opportunity for gratitude, and no interchange of more kindly sentiments, which are as necessary to the education of the rich as they are to the elevation of the poor.

These remarks apply with peculiar force to the administration of the poor law. From the first moment of distress, however it may come, the pauper is brought into contact with a cold and heartless system, from which every trace of sympathy has been most carefully withdrawn. First of all, he is compelled to apply to a paid official, who questions the reality of his destitution and the very nature of his wants. * * * * * And in the workhouse the same process goes on. The master is paid, the matron is paid, the doctor is paid, the nurses now are paid, and even the clergyman is paid to perform his meagre duty. Nowhere is there a trace of disinterested charity, and the sense of thankfulness is diminished, if not entirely destroyed, because the recipient sees no personal sacrifice made for him by any one, and is led to think that charity by act of Parliament is nothing but a right. The officers may be individually kind, and may perform their duties with conscientious care, but active philanthropy is allowed no place, and the introduction of voluntary assistance into the administration of the poor law has been regarded by the guardians with such extreme jealousy, as to lead to its complete exclusion. Hence it is that Christian ministers hold themselves aloof from this heartless organisation. Nowhere in London do they act in harmony with the authorities of the poor law; but, on the contrary, they condemn its inefficiency, and try to supplement its miserable shortcomings by a system of local visitation, which consumes their valuable time, and is, after all, totally inadequate to the work in hand. * * * * *

These observations have been suggested to us by a proposal to introduce the system of lady nursing into the sick wards of the Strand Workhouse, which was discussed by the Guardians at their meeting on Tuesday last, and, as we think, unfortunately rejected by a very large majority. Mr. Storr, by whom the proposition was made, stated that Miss Byron, the Lady Superintendent of the All Saints' Home, Margaret Street, had offered to provide for the constant and daily attendance at the workhouse of two ladies connected with the Home, at no other expense to the Guardians than the provision of slight refreshment during the day, and of a place of privacy to which they might retire during the intervals between their work. These ladies are fully qualified to go round with the medical officer, to take his instructions as to the special treatment of every case, and to carry out the details of that treatment whatever it may be. They already provide for the nursing of the North London Hospital, and the testimony of Dr. Jenner, and of the entire staff of that important charity, is the strongest which can be given in favour of the efficiency of their administration. It is an old saying that one volunteer is worth a hundred pressed men, and the remark is far more applicable here, for nursing, to be done as it should be, is a labour of

refinement and of love, which no money can necessarily provide. All honour then to those noble ladies who have discovered that to give service to the sick is better than gold, and who have shown that the poor inmates of a workhouse sick-ward are not beneath their care.

Mr. Storr enumerated some of the advantages which would result from the introduction of an element into the workhouse system which is thoroughly independent in its character, and animated only by the highest and purest motives of religious duty. The introduction of ladies, said he, who come from true kindness of heart to nurse the sick, is calculated to smooth the asperities of pauper life, and even to soften the manners of the officials towards the poor. The influence of women of this superior class, thoroughly conversant with the requirements of the sick, who would attend from eight o'clock in the morning until eight at night, must necessarily be very great, and their exertions would produce the most beneficial results. It would be far superior to the scamped periodical inspections of the Poor Law Board, and more so still to the weekly visits of ignorant Guardians, which were necessarily little better than a matter of form. With ladies in the ward cruelty would be impossible, and we should hear no more of patients being robbed of the stimulants which were to sustain their life, or of others turned upon their side that they might quickly die.

From the LANCET, September 8, 1866.

VOLUNTEER NURSING.—The nursing of the sick by ladies is now a great fact. Here and there governors of hospitals and boards of guardians may raise, if they will, the oft-repeated cry of "proselytism," or any other foolish excuse for preferring the imperfections of former days to a system which embodies intelligence, the keenest sympathy, and refinement. But the truth must prevail. The nursing by ladies is the very best nursing that England has ever seen; and we live in days when the very best of anything is apt to take its proper place in spite of all obstructive interference from ignorance and prejudice. The women of England are finding in the care of the sick an outlet for their energy and sympathy—a work which is no less interesting than useful, and which, like the quality of mercy, is twice blessed. For it is no small part of the advantage connected with the system that the regular occupation entailed by it is most favourable to the personal health of those engaged. How often and how long have women, unblest by domestic duties, sighed after earnest work—yearned for some mode by which they might feel that the world was being helped along by something they could do! The recent epidemic of cholera has especially served to bring into prominent relief the advantages of volunteer nursing. The disease is one which necessitates more than any other constant watchfulness and attention on the part of nurses. The work done in the London Hospital, in St. George-in-the-East, and in the Commercial-st. Hospital, virtually settles the question as to the capability of ladies to engage with advantage in the nursing of the sick. Those only, however, who have watched the progress of the epidemic can fully appreciate the enormous help which has been given by lady volunteers in the trying scenes from which the East of London is just now emerging. Doubtless these women need no thanks; but we would wish them to know that the medical profession at least, by whose side they have worked, are fully alive to the value of their generous efforts.

Miss FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE, writing on the subject of the methods of nursing adopted in public hospitals, states that "Where the nurses belong to a religious order, and are under their own spiritual heads—the hospital being administered

by a separate and secular governing body—(as in University and King's College Hospitals, London), is the plan on the whole best calculated to secure good nursing for the sick and the general well-being of both patients and nurses."

The late Mrs. JAMESON, another lady of practical experience of the interior of workhouses, wrote thus:—

"Surely I may say there is a want of proper *moral* supervision where the most vulgar of human beings are set to rule over the most vulgar; where the pauper is set to manage the pauper; where the ignorant govern the ignorant; where the aged and infirm minister to the aged and infirm; where every softening and elevating influence is absent, or of rare occurrence, and every hardening and depraving influence continuous and ever at hand."

WILLIAM JENNER, M.D., F.R.S., Physician in Ordinary to her Majesty the Queen, Professor of the practice of Physic in University College, and Physician to University College Hospital, states that "The Sisterhood of All Saints' Home have nursed the patients in my wards in the most exemplary manner. No words of mine could express the difference between the nursing as now performed and as formerly attempted. The whole tone of the ward is changed. I feared before they came to the Hospital that the ladies would (as I had heard of others doing) step out of their province in various ways, and so interfere with the general usefulness of the charity. *Now* I can truly say that in my opinion the greatest misfortune that could befall the inmates of University College Hospital would be the withdrawal of the Sisterhood from the work they have there undertaken, and have so admirably performed."

The following points are admirably set forth in a Letter to Gatherne Hardy, Esq., the President of the Poor Law Board, dated July 23rd, 1866, and signed LOUISA TWINING. (Published by HUNT & Co., Holles Street, Cavendish Square.)

I. That the care of the sick, helpless, and aged, is pre-eminently the duty of educated Christian women, and should ever be their highest privilege and pleasure.

II. That the exclusively pauper nurse system is one of unmixed evil, and must be abandoned. These nurses will do nothing in many cases, unless they are paid for it, and if anything is given to a sick person in the workhouse it is usual for the nurse to obtain the larger portion of it; in fact, the most helpless receive very little help unless they pay for it. These pauper nurses are changed very frequently on account of their drunkenness and negligence.

III. The matron's time is so much occupied with other duties that it is impossible for her to know much of what goes on in the sick wards; the power is really in the hands of the pauper nurses. If ladies assisted in the management and supervision of workhouses, the responsibility of the matron would be shared by them, and the whole work of the house better performed.

IV. An adequate moral supervision is only to be obtained by the example and influence of Christian women, who would devote themselves to attendance on the sick in our workhouse infirmaries; *paid nurses* alone are no panacea for the evils existing, and justly complained of. Our voluntary hos-

pitals are now engaged in endeavours to reform their system of nursing in the direction thus indicated.

V. Separate hospitals for the severe cases and the incurables are essential; under the present circumstances, with so many different classes of inmates under one roof, classification is impossible, as is suitable discipline in each department.

VI. A far stricter discipline and mode of treatment are urgently needed for the able-bodied paupers, and these cannot be secured whilst they are mingled with the sick and aged.

VII. It is quite impossible for any body of Guardians, however well disposed they may be, visiting the house once a week, or once a fortnight, to see into those matters which would properly come under the inspection of women, both as regards household matters, management, comforts for the sick, and many other things, which it is peculiarly within the province of women to administer. A matron alone being in authority is able to deceive a body of gentlemen in a way she could not do if ladies shared her duties and responsibilities.

VIII. Medical inspection, either honorary or paid, is most necessary; at present the one medical man in charge is practically unchecked as to what he may do or suggest, except by the Guardians, who cannot be judges of the requirements of the sick generally, and still less so of special cases.

IX. The chief Official Authorities in whose hands was the remedy for the shortcomings and evils of the present system have shown themselves grievously wanting in all initiative, the inspection has been inadequate, and the central direction and control of the Guardians far too limited.

X. The recently formed Association for the Improvement of Workhouse Infirmaries has now fully exposed a state of things that could not have existed so long had it been widely known and fully realised by the public. Few, if any, of the facts published by the Association have been exaggerated.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW

of August 25 contains a thoughtful paper on "*Sisterhoods in England*," full of suggestions, both to the Sisters and the Administrators of our public Institutions.

THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE POOR LAW BOARD,

just published, speaks in terms of the highest commendation of the systems now adopted at the *Chorlton Union* and at the *Liverpool Workhouse*, on which the *Times* remarks (Sep. 13), "Nursing, in fact, is only just coming into vogue as an occupation for women, but we cannot doubt that as time goes on they will gladly embrace a vocation in which they can render such admirable service. The whole question of nursing the sick, not only in Workhouses, but in Hospitals, is being gradually developed; and we may reasonably hope that such instances as the two we have been considering indicate a new and valuable resource. The next Report must tell us of the resolutions adopted by the Poor Law Board on the subject, and we trust the suffering to which the sick poor have hitherto been exposed is now approaching its end."

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