

being made more and more the subject of discussion amongst the managers of our many hospitals, each hospital has been, or will be, subjected to searching tests, not only as to its sanitary arrangements, and its adaptability to its work, but also as to how the work within its walls is carried on by all to whom that work is entrusted, and how those workers are treated, how they are fed, what recreation they have, &c., &c.

Leaving out doctors, medical superintendents, and Matrons, whose duties and responsibilities are many and great, we will turn to the Sisters, Staff Nurses, and Probationers, and endeavour to describe their duties, work, and relative positions. Briefly, the relative positions of the hospital Sister, Staff Nurse, and Probationer are that the Sister is the head of her wards, the Staff Nurse is the Sister's right hand, and the Probationer is the pupil of both. It has already been said that their hours of duty vary in almost every hospital, but generally the Staff Nurse and Probationer come on duty at 7 a.m.; the Sister may be on duty at 7 a.m., or at any time until 7.45; a little latitude is usually allowed her in this, for reasons to be stated presently. The Staff Nurse and Probationer leave the ward again at 9 a.m. and return at 9.30. At 10.30 the Probationer leaves the ward for recreation and dinner, and returns at 1.30. The Sister leaves at 1 for luncheon or dinner, and also returns at 1.30, when the Staff Nurse leaves, and on alternate days with the Sister, takes her recreation from 1.30 until 3 o'clock, or from 3 until 5, reversing the order of recreation day by day. The Staff Nurse and Probationer leave the ward at 5 for tea, and return at 5.30, Sister being in charge. The Staff Nurse leaves the ward at 8, or half-past, in daily turn with the Probationer. Once a month each Nurse and Probationer has a whole day's holiday, a Supernumerary Nurse, if necessary, taking her place that day.

And now, what are the Sister's, Staff Nurse's, and Probationer's duties?

Perhaps the Sister's most important duty, as head of her wards, and the responsible person, is careful attention to the doctor's directions, which he gives her as she accompanies him in his round. She alone is responsible for the clear understanding and faithful carrying out, by herself and by her Nurses, of those directions, for it is impossible that in large hospitals any, except extraordinary, directions can be given by the doctor to the Matron. The Matron is responsible for the Sister's efficiency; and by her knowledge of, and interest in, the Sister's work, helps and encourages the Sister, but the latter is responsible to the doctor, for the carrying out of all his orders; therefore, she is careful to understand his orders and to explain them, so far as is necessary, to her Nurses. She is strictly honest about any forgetfulness or mistake on her own part, or on the part of any of her Nurses.

Sister has the charge of all medicines, ward stores, and ward linen, and is careful to lock up alcohol and poisons. She either gives the medicines, or instructs her Staff Nurse to do so. In surgical wards, she helps with the dressings, or superintends them; she usually takes the management at operations performed on her own patients. She is careful to have ready at all times, a supply of the different kinds of dressings the various visiting staff prefer; she keeps up her stock of well-padded splints, bandages of all kinds and sizes likely to be used, and of all minor things that are needed, such as catheters, oil-silk, gutta percha tissue, thread, tape, pins, &c., all of which she has, in order, in her cupboards and drawers. Sister serves the patients' dinner, and sees that the patients have it given to them as daintily as is possible. Sister is ever learning, and endeavouring to impart her knowledge to her Nurses; her duty of training her Probationers in practical ward work never ceases, for as a rule she has a change of Probationers every three or four months. The training of Probationers necessitates this constant change, for they must learn the different kinds of Nursing in medical and surgical wards, both men's and women's; they must also gain experience of night work. Sister trains her Nurses to work quickly, yet quietly, allowing no dawdling, and no hurry; she insists too, that her Nurses shall always, for their own sakes, for the sake of the patient, and for the sakes of those about, do everything for their patients, with as great privacy and delicacy as is possible. The Sister is responsible for the economical use of all hospital stores used in her wards, responsible, sometimes in part to the House Surgeon, and in part to the Matron. She is responsible to the Matron for the cleanliness of the patients, the cleanliness of their beds, of all the ward utensils, and of the general daily cleanliness and tidiness of her wards, with all the furniture they contain; also for the bath-rooms and lavatories, and for proper ventilation. She sees that all the work is faithfully done by her Staff Nurse, her Probationer, and her Ward-maid; if any of these fail in doing their work, her duty is to report them to the Matron. In some hospitals, the Sister is responsible for the mending, and in some cases even for part making, of the bed-clothing used in her wards, which has to be done during any leisure time by the Nurses or by convalescing patients. Sister is responsible for the good behaviour (whilst on duty) of her Nurses, and for the good behaviour of her patients; all rude noisiness, and rough and wrong language, are strictly forbidden. She sees, too, that all rules made for the observance of the patients, and of their friends are kept. She is, on visiting days especially, on the alert, not only that she may intercept what may have passed the vigilance of the hall porter, but also that she may speak a word of com-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)