

The Passing of the Matron.

"Is civilisation a failure,
Or is the Caucasian played out?"

I have been reading in a nursing paper a lovely series of open letters to Matrons. I always knew my probationers were brimming over with good advice for me, now I have heard some of it, and I feel that I ought to attempt to rival Captain Reece, the immortal Commander of the Mantelpiece, and I recommend that ballad for the perusal of my fellow Matrons. By following its illustrious example they may satisfy the legitimate claims of their probationers. I have until now, I find, been conducting my business on totally mistaken lines, and have, no doubt, wounded the susceptibilities of many, many nurses when I have told them my plain unvarnished opinion of their shortcomings, when I have regarded their private arrangements as secondary to the welfare of the hospital, and have failed to extend to them that cordial familiarity to which they were, no doubt, socially fully entitled. I have never cared to attract the personal affection of my subordinates, as I have held that it is the duty of a head to hold her office without fear or favour, and to place justice and straight dealing far above that feminine pitfall, "trying to please." And I certainly have not the faintest desire for my probationers to "be kind to me" (I can only imagine my colleague was forced into that expression through the poverty of the English language).

I do most earnestly desire my probationers to be honest, well disciplined, straight, do their work well, be kind to their patients, and respect and obey me as their Matron—anything beyond that is entirely their own business. It pains me to hear of one of my probationers being mean or dishonourable or shoddy, but it would not trouble me in the least to find that she, personally, did not like me—it seems to me a thing outside official relations, and not one that would in any way affect my behaviour to her.

In the little matter of speaking first, etiquette has decided that it shall be the superior officer; it is a trifling thing, but most people know it before they come to hospital, and so do not blunder over it.

The Matron's duty in a hospital, as far as the nursing staff is concerned, is not always a pleasant one; it is to *train* them, to find fault with wrongdoing, to insist on unpleasant things being done when necessary, to enforce a discipline that seems beside the mark to her subordinates, to be just and show no favouritism. It looks very different from a probationer's point of view—(curious to relate, I have been a probationer once).

From their side of the hedge Matrons are strange people, very! They hold weird and uncomfortable ideas that interfere with one's ordinary pleasures and desires. Why, for instance, should one not

run full tilt down a corridor, shouting cheerily to a friend in front if one wants to? It doesn't hurt anybody. Why should one keep one's bedroom tidy? Clothes piled anyhow on the bed and bulging from wardrobes, with dusty cardboard boxes surmounting one's cupboard give a pleasant air of studied negligence to a room. So much less trouble, too. Also, why not spend a spare half-hour in friendly chat with the house surgeon? He is a very pleasant young man, and knew Freddie quite well at Cambridge. Then, all this silly talk about not wasting hospital stores or breaking hospital crockery! Downright stinginess, I call it, and nothing else. Economy is a mean virtue, and should never be carried too far. Why be punctual? Surely grown women can be trusted to go to bed when they think fit, and so on, and so on.

And the Matron knows it all, remembers it all, smiles over it all if she has any sense of humour, and goes on her way. But if she once begins to mind or care what her subordinates say of her, and deviates from what she knows and feels to be right for the sake of currying favour, her day is over; let her hand in her resignation and retire, she will do no more good in her post.

"Words cannot help, nor wit achieve,
Nor e'en the all-gifted fool,
Too weak to enter, bide, or leave
The lists he cannot rule.
Beneath the sun we count on none
Our evil to assuage,
Except the men that do the work,
For which they draw the wage."

M. MOLLETT.

Our Five Guinea Prize.

As our readers appear to find difficulty in determining what are and what are not Practical Nursing subjects, we beg to announce that we are prepared to offer a Prize of Five Guineas for the best paper containing about 2,000 words, and illustrated, preferably by photographs or engravings, on the following subjects, or others of a like nature:—

1. The Care of an Infant for the First Twenty-four Hours of Life.
2. How to Sterilise the Nurse.
3. The Feeding of Delirious Patients.
4. Hot-water Bottles and their Application.
5. Special Baths.
6. How to Tempt the Invalid's Appetite.

The Rules for the Competition will be found on page 20.

Princess Louise (Duchess of Argyll) on Tuesday afternoon attended the annual meeting of the Kensington Nursing District Association. On Thursday H.R.II. received purses at Carnforth Lodge, Hammersmith, on behalf of the Hammersmith and Fulham District Nursing Association.

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