

Musings in My Garden.

Matrons' thoughts on things in general seem to be rather appreciated. Now I am a Matron on a small scale; I muse much in my garden when cutting sweet peas and spinach with my surgical scissors. (We presume the scissors no longer serve their original purpose.—Ed.) I think and think; if it were as easy to write as to think I could have wasted much ink; and one thing has often come to me—how seldom the bright and happy side of life is spoken of. To take my own sphere—cottage hospitals—when I applied for this post I was full of misgivings, for I was haunted by the tales of woe told by nurses who had tried a cottage hospital, been discouraged, and given up. Now I propose to tell some of the happy and pleasant things to encourage those who wish for their own little hutch, and those who have it, but do not get on.

I think most fail through want of courage and endurance. I failed in health after the usual eighteen months that a single handed nurse holds out; but out of six months' sickness came much good.

I often think how wonderfully things have developed. I came to an old house in an old garden; we only had men and boys for patients for months, and I used to sing this to them:—

“A noble army, men and boys,
The Matron, and the maid,”

which described us all.

Now we have a new hospital built on to the old house, a probationer, and three to do the housework; we are often eleven in house, and all of us happy together, taking it all round. Sometimes as many as forty or fifty visitors come during the day. Our days are always fourteen hours long. We almost always have someone very ill, and at intervals a death; but, really, we are very happy on the whole, and we have no time to be dull.

The wards look so nice and clean, and really I am proud of my little hospital. It is nice how the patients who come like it, and come again to see us. Yes, we do get great pleasure out of our life. When I go round the garden and see the fruit, pick what we want to use, fetch the eggs every day, and cut fresh salads, I often feel glad that I have some household cares as well as the nursing work to do, to feel I am always wanted even if I am tired out. It is better to hear “Matron here?” all day, than never to be wanted anywhere, then in this lovely soft air, the skies are so often blue, so blue, the blossoms of myrtle and roses mingle, and the yucca and aloe bloom in the open, and other things which are rare hothouse plants elsewhere! I have date palms and oranges growing on the verandah, all my own growing! Then there is my cat, the dearest of all dogs to go out with, my canary and dove, and my pen of chickens, all to attend to. When I take my holidays it is easy to get a trained nurse for deputy, but oh! the doubts

as to whether she will be able to manage the animals and the birds! one can only hope so. All these things are great pleasures, they are a great help in making the Hospital home-like and in taking away the “institution” tone.

While the beds are made the men can have a pipe on the verandah, imagine that. I often think they forget they are in hospital. We have some fun, too, for there are some simple folk left yet, like the man who ate the banana, skin and all, and said it was “lovely.” Another, reading *Punch*, when I asked if he liked it, “didn't know as ever he'd tasted it!” These are by the way; it shows the sort of patients we meet with.

Pound day remains popular, and the smiling, bright faces of former patients are good to see, as they come in, bringing single “pounds,” or they send huge basketfuls from out-lying villages.

Harvest festivals are bewildering, huge hampers come day after day laden with apples and vegetables, the vegetable marrows being often of vast proportions, and there are flowers that have to be “arranged in wash-tubs in the hall, such quantities that make one sigh for the waste, for many of them are crushed and faded before we get them.

I hope these stray thoughts—disjointed, rambling as they are—may give help and be a pleasure to some who are tempted to give up, for discouragement by the way. I think we all say too much of the trials of life; that is not the way to enjoy life. Goodness knows it is often hard enough. I could go on, and on, but it is getting too late; there is no “night super” to call “lights out” to me, and I am afraid I often burn much midnight oil; in fact, my day only begins at ten o'clock, when I am free to read and write for an hour or two.

Shall I tell you some more of my garden musings one day, with the permission of the editor? E. P.

Testimonial to Miss Peter.

It is hoped that during the United Conference, to be held next month, of the Northern and Southern Superintendents connected with the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses, the presentation to Miss Peter, the late General Superintendent of the Institute, may be made. The presentation will take the form of a cheque.

The Use of Criticism.

Miss Alice Lucas, speaking at the Graduate Nurses' Association, Springfield, said:—

“To all strong natures must come criticism of our conduct, our methods of work, our life. To meet and overcome these one by one, in the true spirit, will only develop and build character, and, after all, no matter what our profession, this is the great aim we are all striving for—a life that has helped some other bear the heat and burden of the day. It is ours to be ‘great or little by our own wills.’”

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