

it no responsibilities, and as its responsibilities increase so its joy and its wounds increase, and believe me there is no joy in life like work and no joy in work without responsibility.

Now no amount of teaching will make a nurse into a Matron, neither will the black dress and the fine cap. It is the woman herself that will either be a failure or a success. It is no use demanding respect, we must command it, and to do that the nurses must feel that the Matron asks from them their best work, and will take nothing else; moreover, that she knows the best work when she sees it. It is not the proved competent nurses who are at the head of the wards that the Matron must worry about, it is the little careless probationer who has newly come in, and is the weakest spot, that should cause her anxiety, and that nurse should soon begin to feel that the Matron has her in her mind, and that it is time to begin to put her back into her work.

There are a few sayings with which I comfort myself from time to time, little bits of worldly wisdom I have picked up and use when the difficulties and disagreeables of one's busy life press on me.

"Even to this the gods will grant an end." I say it when I am bored with monotonous work, a work of a passive kind, which always tries my very restless physical nature.

"When your position demands that you use your own judgment, no other person's judgment will be as good." Therefore in important matters I never ask advice; on me is the responsibility, and I must accept the consequences.

"You cannot do well more than one thing at a time, therefore you had better not try." Do not think about one thing while you do another, not even to-morrow's worries, while you do the work of to-day.

"You cannot do better than your best"—but you must be sure it is your best, and never forget you are *paid* for your best work.

Now and then it is well to stand still and take stock; not often, for it is not well to go deep down to the bottom of our minds too frequently, but between Christmas and New Year, when there is a pause and we have time to think, it is not an unprofitable exercise. First, let us face the responsibility that our influence and authority give us, and realise its far-reaching effects. If our ideals are low and our aim sordid they will be reflected in our staff, and wherever after these nurses may go their influence will be influenced by ours; it is like throwing a stone in a pool and watching the circles widening to the edge, only ours widen to eternity. It is a thought to make the soul shiver.

Then let us for once tell ourselves the naked, shameless truth about ourselves. What our faults have been, known only to ourselves; when we have missed our ideals; when we have ignored the n and made convenience our god; when our truth has only

been on the surface; when our courage has failed us; when our severity has been harsh; when our mercy has been weakness, looking every fault straight in the face, tearing off every rag of self-respect, till we are down to the bed-rock of our self-complacency, without a rag of self-respect left. Then let us think of our good deeds, how we helped someone here, stood for truth there, used our power mercifully if justly, how we have done our duty as we saw it, thus gradually clothing ourselves in clean garments of self-respect, and we are able to stand before the world again once more upright.

Once when I was travelling to Scotland I got into conversation with my opposite neighbour (an elderly man), and we talked of many things—poetry, art, politics and religion. He told me that his idea of religion was comprised in a verse in Ezekiel. "And He said unto me, Son of Man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee." This has always seemed to me a very fine embodiment of a religious belief.

And now finally I must ask you to pardon me for having preached you a sermon, but you see I am a Scottish woman, and with us it is a weakness.

I have not touched on practical details, partly because I had to deliver my message, and partly because Miss Mollett was to follow me, and I know I leave all that in most excellent hands.

## A Deep into a French Hospital.

At the beginning of this year I spent a few weeks in Paris. Going back there after training for nearly four years in a London hospital, I was naturally anxious to visit a French hospital. The friends with whom I was staying are on intimate terms with Professor X., a celebrated surgeon, and he kindly invited us to assist at a few operations at the hospital, which he visits. We arrived there at 9 a.m., and found the house surgeon and a number of white-robed dressers waiting in the female ward. Monsieur X. decided upon the three operations he wished to perform that morning—an appendicectomy, an amputation of breast, and a suture of kidney. Whilst the surgeon retired to don his white garments, I looked about me. The ward was simply a large hall, with whitewashed walls, high windows, all closed on account of the dressings I was told. There was regular accommodation for sixty beds, if I remember rightly, but eighty-three patients were already packed into it. The beds were separated by a locker, and an extra row of beds or stretchers had been put down the middle of the ward, with a chair between each, on which stood wine, bread, &c. Neither screen nor curtain, of course. The beds were untidy, and no attempt at smartness in the way of counterpanes was attempted. One patient was out of bed, and she calmly slipped off her skirt and

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)