

## The Selection of Hospital Probationers.

BY MISS M. LOANE.

There is often serious misconception among probationers and their friends as to the principles upon which they are selected or rejected by Ward Sisters and Matrons, and these experienced women are consequently subject to accusations of arbitrariness and caprice, and reproached for discarding excellent material. Each probationer is keenly conscious of her own gifts, but much more dimly aware of her failings, and entirely without any definite idea of the qualities really demanded in a nurse, and the proportion in which they must be possessed.

The trainer's first demand is *vocation*. I am so far in subjection to the "angel" theory that I fully believe that every nurse who has survived the changes and chances and perils of several years' strict training, however far short she may fall of the desired standard, has to an appreciable extent a vocation — something which enables her to go on doing work for an endless procession of strangers which could only be done for her nearest and dearest by the woman without this distinguishing trait. It is of course useless to ask a girl whether she has felt this vocation, for you will only receive a stereotyped and practically meaningless reply. Until she has been tried, she herself does not know whether she has any calling or election. Many a one has cherished from early childhood the belief that she was destined to be a ministering angel, and the dream has shrivelled and vanished at the first scorching breath of reality; while others have become nurses simply as an honest means of earning a livelihood, and have suddenly felt their vocation when the sight of a ward full of sufferers has made their hearts swell, and stirred their brains into activity and their souls into self-forgetfulness. A Ward Sister can soon discover if the vocation exists, and she need not wait for any great occasion; to watch the way the novice feeds a helpless patient, even to observe the manner in which she carries round tea to the rank and file, will be a sufficient guide to the truth. Any work of supererogation, however trifling, is always a promising sign, while a dry, curt refusal of a patient's request is a danger signal.

The next point is teachableness. It is not desirable that the probationer should be naturally of a yielding disposition, for without a strong will she can never be worth much, but her strength must be temporarily turned to submission. Implicit obedience is indis-

pensable, and without a certain amount of humility it cannot be practised.

Obedience to fixed rules is as necessary as obedience to direct orders, and as it is far more difficult to exact it must rank as a higher branch of the virtue. A disobedient probationer is useless and must be dismissed, but one distinction may be made: the girl who breaks rules for her own benefit is incorrigible, but if she has acted for the supposed benefit of a patient, it may be possible to make her understand that the really good and sympathetic nurse is the one who can persuade a sufferer to keep to a distasteful routine, not the one who helps her to evade it.

Good manners are essential, and they must spring from the heart and be thoroughly ingrained by early teaching and early practice. The pleasant surface good humour so common among young and happy girls will not stand the test of life in a hospital ward, the fatigue, the despatch, the inevitable fault-finding, and the occasional injustice.

No probationer who shows a marked love of excitement, whether of a professional nature or in her amusements when off duty, can ever become a good nurse, while great talkers are always deficient in memory, and entirely lacking in concentration and orderly methods of thought. A smile, a courteous phrase, is all that is required by the patients; much conversation wearies and bewilders them, while to hear two nurses talking and laughing together irritates invalids to an intolerable degree.

Marked scholastic abilities are by no means necessary, but the probationer must not be below a certain intellectual level, and it would be well if the trainer had some easy means of arriving at what her attainments are, especially what power she has shown in such slightly abstract subjects as grammar and arithmetic. Clumsiness is an insuperable bar to good nursing, but genuine, inborn, incorrigible clumsiness must not be confused with mere carelessness. The innately clumsy person will break twenty thermometers in a month, while the simply careless will seldom be called on to pay a second half-crown.

A certain degree of manual dexterity is obligatory, especially in view of the constant increase of purely surgical nursing, but the experienced trainer cannot avoid noticing that mechanical perfection is often co-existent with an entire lack of sympathy. There are nurses, some of whom have been allowed to reach high positions, who have the same pleasure in padding splints or cutting elaborate dressings that a skilled workman has in a fine piece of brass-work or wood-carving, and will proceed to

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