

mine as if it were yesterday. I had a girl friend, the member of a family in which the individuality of each was so strongly defined that the world at large has missed a chance of laughter—that they were unknown to Dickens. Suffice it to say the younger daughter, “a gipsy-eyed jade,” as one brother described her, disappeared one day from this strange family circle, and reappeared as a nurse (*a rara avis* in the mid-seventies), at the Children’s Hospital, Nottingham, then under the direction of an Anglican Sisterhood. Piqued with curiosity I paid her a visit, and was surprised to find the entrance gate barred and shuttered at mid-day. Imagine my surprise, when I was admitted, to spy my friend, her face half hidden in a wing-like cap, her skirts gathered about her waist, a short scarlet flannel petticoat reaching to her knees, her feet and legs bare, in full view of neighbouring windows—*cleaning out the fountain!* For a moment we gaped at one another, and then flew at one another, and embraced amidst whole-hearted explosions of laughter, permissible in nurses in their teens.

Then we passed across the little garden, and I entered a hospital ward for the first time. What a pitiable and piteous sight! Stuffy, dirty, disorderly rooms, ill-odorous, grimy little inmates—I can see and smell it after all these years. It was a lesson I never forgot.

And in a short space of time what a change is here! When next I passed through the gate, the mouldy fountain was gone, tender spring grasses were sprouting in its place, the square was swept and garnished, the windows of the little hospital smiling and twinkling in the sun, and when the door was opened the whole place was redolent of flowers, blended with whiffs of turpentine and soapsuds, which divulged the secret of the speckless interior. My heart sank apprehensively. I had come to offer service, I had thought to be of use, to do hard and dreary work, to scour and clean and polish up, to wash and sweeten those sticky babies, to see them rosy, and decked in fine linen and ribbons—behold the genius of order had touched that little hospital with magic wand, and the great goddess Hygeia had gathered it under her beneficent wing!

I like to recall my first interview with “my first Matron,” because the impression her powerful personality made upon me remains to this day one of keen appreciation and pleasure. Imagine, then, a little woman, dressed, with much demureness, in black, wearing, as I think all matrons should, a nurse’s uniform, and whose cap and apron were quite the whitest, simplest, and most becoming to be seen. The hair was worn parted, and drawn back chastely from her fine brow, and the face was

sparkling, glowing, beautiful alike in expression and colouring; the eyes shone like two fine sapphires—no inner consciousness could evade their flashing insight. The mouth—most tell-tale of features—was characteristic; no pursed-up rosebud, but frankly expressive; wit, irony, audacity, immobility, endurance—fine qualities with which to fight the world—all lurked in its charming curves. A very dainty mobile little hand, touched lightly the head of a fine dog which rested on her knee, the beseeching eye of which said plainly, “Deign, beloved mistress, to notice thy beloved hound—come out into the sunshine in the meadows—by the waterways—let us gambol.” How soon dog lovers learn the language of the eye!

Our interview, though short, was by no means perfunctory. I presented an offering of great odorous Czar violets—fresh from the home garden—she buried her face in them with delight (Charlie, kingly hound, also poked his nose into the basket); a few words sufficed to express the imperative desire for work upon my part, and the instinctive appreciation of my needs upon the part of the matron. I offered ten stone of perfect physical development, youth, and boundless enthusiasm, and in spite of appearances (low be it spoken, I had made my call in very short kilted skirts, Norfolk jacket, billycock hat, and very neat boots, and to these incongruities may be added, a button-hole, a stick, and a “waist”!) she thought the offer sound, and we struck a bargain there and then.

A few weeks later I began my training under the direction of the strictest disciplinarian and the most able administrator it has been my pleasure to meet, during the whole twenty years in which I have been connected with nursing. I here learnt the great lesson that discipline effects organization, organization produces order, and that order, Nature’s first law, is the basis of good nursing. We are somewhat in danger, in these philanthropic days, of overlooking this sound principle, and it would be well for the future development of the profession of nursing that we should halt and consider these things.

E. G. F.

Vacancies.

- MATRONS are required for the General Hospital, Birmingham. Salary £100.
 The Infirmary, Bolton. Salary £75.
 Royal Infirmary, Preston. Salary £70.
 The New Hospital for Women, London. Salary £60, rising to £80.
 The Borough Isolation Hospital, Hastings. Salary £50.
 The Louth Hospital, Lincolnshire. Salary £40.

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