

Matrons in Council.**The Duty of the Matron to her Profession.***

By MISS M. MOLLETT,
Matron of the Royal South Hants Infirmary.



BEFORE beginning this paper, I feel it necessary to apologise for its sketchy nature, and for my presumption in undertaking to speak upon a subject others would have approached so far more worthily. There are so many Matrons who have performed their duty to their profession, as well as their professional duties, so admirably, that they fill me with respect and admiration, and I cannot but wish that they were taking my place here to-day; but I beg them to believe that it is through no fault of mine that they are not doing so. Speaking personally—and as a Matron—it is difficult to read such a paper as this, and not to feel conscience-stricken as to one's own shortcomings. As a matter of fact, the whole time I was compiling these few sheets, I seemed to be reading myself a severe lecture on the many things I ought to be doing but didn't. The profession of a Matron, in the sense in which we are using the word, is that of nursing. When a nurse becomes a Matron, she does not leave her profession and enter another one, she remains a nurse with the same aims and objects as she had before. Her duties are still the carrying out of medical orders, the efficient and proper nursing of the patients, the maintenance of discipline and order in the wards, only she approaches the subject from another and wider point of view, that is all. A hospital Matron may have to act as secretary, book-keeper or housekeeper—or she may have to combine these with many other callings—but she is, before all else, the Head Nurse of the hospital, the chief—the superintendent of the nursing staff—responsible for their welfare as for the good nursing of the patients. Nor must she ever allow herself to drift out of touch with those of her profession who are working with her and under her in the wards. The highest praise you can give a general is that he is a good soldier, and his good soldiership will show itself in the good discipline of his troops, their courage under his leadership, and their success under his skill—and so the good order, the good management, the good nursing of a hospital, will always largely depend on the nursing knowledge which the

Matron brings to bear on the duties of her office. I do not hesitate to say that the very first duty of a Matron to her profession is simply to bear herself throughout her career in such a manner as to be a credit to it; and if she does her work in the simple and conscientious spirit of an honourable woman, nothing higher or better can be asked of her.

Nor is this easy, for a Matron must be so many, many excellent things, her knowledge must be so accurate and varied, and her patience so endless, if she would grapple successfully with her work in all the different phases in which it presents itself, at all events, to the rank and file amongst us the County Matrons. Rudyard Kipling writes of the Marine "how his work begins by Gawd knows when, and his work is never through," and the same might truthfully be said of us. For, by the time you have grasped your duties as steward, clerk of the works, housekeeper, and head nurse, have learnt to keep a watchful eye on the expenditure, and done your best to make it tally with efficiency you are inclined to be a little tired. Then, knowing you have done your best for your own particular hospital, you are apt to feel as if you had done your whole duty by your profession, and as if no more could possibly be required of you. But there you are wrong. For when you take a post that, more or less, even if in a humble way, marks you as a leader, as one successful in your profession or calling, your duties undoubtedly become wider as your influence is greater.

You are consciously or unconsciously a pattern by which others fashion themselves, and, just as you acknowledge or repudiate your wider professional duties, others will acknowledge or repudiate theirs. Therefore, willingly or unwillingly, you have often to face questions and situations you would rather leave alone, and it behoves you to act towards public as well as private duties as your conscience teaches you is right.

In the daily round, the common task, your way is often clear, if not easy. No Matron will deny that to maintain a high professional standard in her own hospital, to discourage the slipshod work of half-knowledge, and to encourage a proper pride in and devotion to nursing, are all part of her duty. But those duties—more hard to define—which lie outside her immediate work, duties of citizenship, of a wider loyalty to her profession than that due to her immediate circle—those duties are often unrecognised, still more often unfulfilled.

Any amount of good work is done by those who are never heard of—who have no outside appreciation—but who, in outlying districts, often in depressing and unsympathetic surroundings, fight the battle of good and efficient nursing, and in no way whatever can a Matron better forward the

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