

interests of her profession, than in unselfishly forwarding the interests of the nurses and patients in the hospital under her charge. Every hospital where the Matron earns the respect and esteem of all who work with her—where the tone is good and the nursing thorough—becomes a nucleus of professional improvement.

I frankly confess that a Matron's position is very liable to develop a policy of selfish—if not splendid—isolation, and a self-satisfaction which is detrimental to a more forward policy.

Comfortable in your hospital, with pleasant friends and a good committee, plenty of work, and beginning to feel, well, not quite so young as you were, you are strongly tempted to be satisfied with your lot, not to struggle or fight any more, but, shutting your eyes to the wider subject of the organization of your profession, to be contented with a personal success you are more than half inclined to believe is very well deserved. Yet you are wrong again. If nursing is to progress, not retrogress, if we are to hand to our successors something of the pride in our work and calling we have inherited, we must not, whilst fulfilling the daily and unquestioned duties of our life, forget what we owe to the management and government of the profession generally.

There is hardly a single trade, profession, or calling that has attained to any standing, or any lasting success, that has not founded some organisation or made some arrangement by which the members themselves regulate their purely personal professional matters for their own benefit, regulating their affairs briefly on lines that they know and appreciate, and for objects they desire. Now, in all these organisations, those who through energy or by good fortune hold prominent positions devote some portion of their time and money to aiding and furthering the welfare of their fellow workers.

Such associations have always been found to be immediately helpful to good work and progression; the union of individuals has furthered the interests of the community, the knowledge of a few has become the knowledge of all, the strength of a few has become the strength of all, like the woodman's bundle of sticks, one has stiffened the other.

It is beyond all question the duty of a Matron—of all Matrons—to further, by all the means in their power, the professional unity upon which the future of our profession depends, and the independence of the profession in purely personal matters, which alone can give that unity dignity. This, I take it, is the object of the Matrons' Council. To remind Matrons, as well as others connected with nursing, that whilst they owe it to their profession to carry out their work well and conscientiously, they must not neglect, as far as lies in their power, to further the interests of the profession as a whole.

It is hardly necessary, at the same time, to point out to you that many of us—often the best of us—are not in the least adapted to shine in public life, and have no desire to do so. All men are not born politicians, nor all women, and anxious as we may be to do our duty as good citizens, general aimless and desultory agitation is not the best or most certain method of gaining our objects. And here again the Matrons' Council will step in, here we may meet and think out the subjects in which we are interested—here we can discuss and decide among ourselves as to the line of policy to be pursued in regard to unsettled and doubtful points in nursing, and without parading either our troubles or our wants before the general public.

But these few pages would not be complete if we did not touch upon the details, familiar as they are to most of us, by which each Matron can further the interests of her profession—do her duty by it in her own particular sphere.

Perhaps no more important step was ever taken by any association than the official recognition of the three years standard of training for Nurses by the Royal British Nurses' Association, and the necessity for this registration, by a body outside, and independent of individual training schools, and for that step the Matrons, who were then members, were mainly responsible. This official recognition took place years ago. But although by this time no one denies but that a three years' standard of proper training (I am not speaking of a three years' haphazard browsing in the wards) is infinitely more advantageous than a shorter period to hospitals, and is absolutely essential to nurses, in how many general hospitals and infirmaries do we not still find two or one year's training in vogue? I cannot help thinking that, with a little more firmness on the part of the Matrons of these hospitals, the three years' system might be introduced before the time comes, as it undoubtedly will, when the state registration of trained nurses will be an accomplished fact, and no training school can exist that does not fulfil the prescribed conditions. One of those conditions will undoubtedly be a three years' standard of training. In the meantime, I know quite well it may be a trifle more difficult in the provinces, to obtain probationers who will sign for three years, instead of two. For if those who are commencing their nursing career know that they can obtain in two years in one hospital the certificate for which they must wait three years in another, they will, unless they happen to be exceptionally farsighted, prefer the two years' training. Yet, we all of us admit the value of the extra year, both to our institution and our probationers. Certainly one of the first duties of a Matron to her profession is to strive to introduce the three years' system into her own domain, in justice both to her patients and probationers.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)