

of a noble woman may be, and always she is unselfish, uncomplaining, sympathetic, strong. Her very presence is restful, and in emergencies those about her instinctively turn to her for aid, knowing that she will not fail them. There are many such in our ranks, we know it, and glory in the fact. But they no longer compose the bulk of the nursing profession, they are scarcely even typical of it.

AND so we have a study of the present day nurse, which we are fain to admit is in a great measure true, though we should like to repudiate it, for Nurse Isabel is an entirely unsympathetic, vain, and self-centred person, with redeeming traits it is true, but her one idea is herself, her personal comfort, amusement, and happiness. If her patients contribute to this end, well and good. If not, she feels aggrieved, and develops nervous headaches and other convenient ailments. Nevertheless, she is in great request as a nurse, her becoming uniform contributing largely to the formation of the opinion as to her capacity entertained by a medical man who prides himself on his discernment of character.

AND as to her patients—well, to certain classes she is congenial. There is the man, for instance, who sends her a rare stamp which he has abstracted from his wife's album, from which we may assume that Nurse Isabel is right to some degree in her estimate of herself. "There are three classes of nurses," she says, "those who are fetching, those who are scientific, and those who are neither fetching nor scientific," and then she thanks goodness that she belongs to the first class.

BUT when we are introduced to her she is sent to nurse a man who is beaten down with sorrow. First, he lost his dearest friend in an accident on the Alps, and then, quite suddenly, the only sister in whom his life was bound up, and so, though he has written a book which makes for him a world-wide reputation, he, nevertheless, at the end of a severe illness, has no desire, no nerve, to face life once more, and even doubts his ability to write anything which will be a success.

AND for him Nurse Isabel has no message, no power to win him back to take up the duties of life once more. One feels that he recovers not because of her care of him, but in spite of it. The best thing that she does for him is to introduce him to the heroine of the story, who is able to sympathize with his troubles, and enter into his literary aspirations, and whose society consequently proves to be the needed tonic which does more than all Nurse Isabel, with her

professional knowledge, has been able to accomplish.

AND from our study of Nurse Isabel we learn once more the lesson that, in the making of a good nurse, character is of vital importance. A high degree of professional skill avails comparatively little, if the patient is in distress of mind and needs sympathy and patience, though the latter without the former are equally unavailing. We are more and more convinced that the best basis on which to build the superstructure of an ideal nurse is a disciplined, sympathetic, and unselfish nature, which, putting personal considerations on one side, devotes itself to the matter in hand, the recovery of the patient. We say disciplined, advisedly, because there is a very real danger in the case of a woman of strong sympathies that these may at times get the better of her discretion, but, kept well in hand, they are a force second to none in her fight with disease.

MISS HARRADEN'S book has, without doubt, its lesson for us, and we think it is this. We all of us have our ideals as to what a nurse should be. Is the public estimate of trained nurses in danger of being lowered? It would almost seem so. Then let us aim always at our ideals, we shall not attain them, but we shall at least accomplish more than if we did not strive after them, and it is, by the efforts of individuals, that the nursing profession as a whole will rise, or fall, in public estimation.

BUT, apart from her nursing, it must be conceded that Nurse Isabel had mistaken her vocation—there is much we can find to like in her. She says of herself, when she hears of an adverse criticism, "Well, the worst he can say of me is that I am a ridiculous and vain woman, and rather underbred in spite of my pose of refinement. But I am not bad hearted." And it is recorded of her "she has been a brick to an ill-tempered old mother, has supported her, borne with her, and loved her, and kept steady and straight for her sake, and amid many dangers, specially tempting to a frivolous character like hers," and so, when we find rumours being spread abroad about her character by a man who desired to injure her, our sympathies are all with her, and we are indignant with the medical men who, one after another, refused her work, on the strength of the reports, without troubling themselves to enquire into the truth of the accusations, although they knew that by depriving her of work they were depriving her of bread and butter. One of them subsequently said, in excuse for himself, "The fact is, Nurse, that in the hurry and scurry after wealth and position, one is liable

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)