

County Hospitals.

By MISS MOLLETT,

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THE SISTERS.

Though the system which makes the individual Sister remarkably responsible for her own charge is excellent, the peculiar life in a hospital, more especially a county hospital, tends to develop certain faults in her, which will, most probably, occur readily to my readers. There is the apathy that is sometimes engendered by years of work in the same groove, the impatience of control or of change, which rises from the same source; there is the tendency in some natures to be tyrannical when entrusted with a little brief authority; there is, often in keen and good Sisters, a rivalry with other wards and Sisters that leads to jealousy and wrangling. The house surgeon, for the time being, has a fatal fascination for others, whilst some exercise to the full the wearisome prerogative of the true blue Briton if grumbling in season and out of season. In short, all the faults to which those are liable who lead lives singularly full of concentrated interest, but which must, necessarily, be rather narrow, are found amongst them. I do not mean by any means, that all Sisters have these faults, but they seem to me the principal ones into which they are liable to drift or sail.

The Sisters here are on duty from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., and are off duty daily for two hours in the afternoon, or three hours in the evening, but they frequently stay on when the ward is heavy, or there are anxious cases. They have half Sunday off duty on alternate Sundays, one week day off duty in the month, and a whole Sunday once in five weeks. The Out-Patient Sister, whose department is closed on Sundays, takes charge for the Sister whose whole Sunday off it is.

In the rules for the Sisters, the fact that they are themselves to take part in, as well as to superintend the nursing, and to help in training the probationers, is especially emphasized. Each Sister takes her own cases to the theatre, but the theatre Sister and theatre nurse attend to the instruments, dressings, and so forth.

Whilst the Matron often attends and watches operations, she does not take any part in attending on the surgeons.

The Night Sister comes on duty with the night nurses at 9 p.m., and goes off duty at 8 a.m. and the whole hospital is practically under her control for that time. She sleeps in quarters

for the night nurses at the top of the hospital, dines with them, generally looks after them, and is responsible for them. She ranks directly after the Assistant Matron. Of all posts that of the Night Superintendent is, I think, the most difficult to fill satisfactorily. She has to superintend the night nursing of the whole hospital; it is all done by probationers, to answer the door bells and attend to all casualties, to call all servants and probationers in the morning, to take the probationers' breakfast and the night nurses' dinner, besides bringing the Matron her report at 8.30 a.m. When the hospital is heavy she is distinctly busy.

PROBATIONERS.

The nurses proper, other than Sisters, in this hospital are practically all probationers. They are trained for three years, receiving no salary for the first two years, and £10 in their third year; of course, with uniform and washing. Most of the training schools in this neighbourhood, Winchester, Portsmouth, Salisbury, etc., pay their probationers either from the beginning of their training or in their second year, but the great drawback to our training school is undoubtedly the Home, which urgently requires rebuilding, otherwise the training and experience is excellent. The probationers here come for three months on trial; at the end of that time they sign a paper agreeing to remain for three years, and to conform to the rules of the hospital. During their three years training they receive three courses of lectures from the visiting medical staff, and classes from the Matron. They have to pass two out of three examinations to obtain their certificate, but are allowed two tries at one; they have also to satisfy the Matron as to their ward work and general conduct.

They are divided into first, second, and third year probationers, each year wearing a different coloured belt. The third year probationers act as staff probationers, and have several small privileges. The probationers are expected to do a fair—but I do not consider an undue—amount of ward work. I am personally a great believer in the training value of hard work; it is harder at the time, but I am sure the results in the end are more satisfactory.

The kind of probationer who is quite willing to train as long as it is easy enough, is not usually a very valuable acquisition. I am not going to join a Jeremiad about the decadence of the modern probationer. I cannot get outside myself to see what kind of a probationer I was eighteen years ago, but candid and kind friends have told me that I was fairly trying, and I expect the Sisters of that day grumbled as much over their raw material as mine do now.

But we were at all events free from one

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