

THE  
**BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING**  
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
**THE NURSING RECORD**  
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 809.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1903

Vol. XXXI.

**Editorial.**

**HOSPITAL FRIENDSHIPS.**

A pleasant feature of a probationer's life while in training is the opportunity which it affords of forming friendships with other women of the same profession, with whom she has many ideals and aspirations in common, and with whose personality she finds herself in affinity. Such friendships are natural, and are often productive of mutual happiness, but friendships and work should be kept distinct; it is a mistake, though to some extent a natural one, if when the training period is over, and a post of more or less responsibility is gained by a graduate nurse, she finds a berth for the friend of former days in the institution in which she holds office.

In the first place, supposing that a Matron obtains the appointment of Assistant Matron or Sister for her friend, it is almost inevitable—human nature being what it is—that the friend who has hitherto been on terms of equality with her should find it difficult to subordinate her own opinion, and accord the deference, which is her due, to her superior officer. It is almost inevitable, not only that some element of jealousy should tinge the feelings of the less favoured friend, but also that some slackness should creep into the official relationships of the Matron and her subordinate. Even if they keep up appearances in public, there is apt to be a feeling amongst the nursing staff that this is to some extent "play-acting," which does not make for discipline.

In our opinion, it is wiser, therefore, that friendships from a professional point of view should be ruled out of court. The post of Commander-in-Chief is necessarily a lonely one if discipline is to be maintained, and this, in miniature, is the position which a Matron holds in the institution with which she is connected. For this reason professional associations for Superintendents are of especial value. In these they meet their professional equals, with whom

they can take counsel. They are thus saved the mistake, from the point of view of generalship, of consulting with their subordinates, a procedure always, under the best conditions, subversive of discipline, while, under those less favourable, it may be fraught with very undesirable consequences.

And the remarks we have made as to Matrons and Sisters hold good also in relation to Sisters and Staff Nurses. A Matron is wise if she avoids placing a Staff Nurse in a ward in which her friend holds the position of Sister. But, even so, it not unfrequently happens that a friendship grows up in the course of work. There is cause for congratulation when work in common results in mutual respect and goodwill amongst all grades in a ward. But this happy condition is almost impossible where the Ward Sister and one nurse are "hand and glove." Lack of discipline is almost inevitable, as well as some discontent on the part of the rest of the nursing staff of the ward, who feel that one of their number has Sister's ear and that her outlook on matters of common concern is coloured by the views of her favourite.

Favouritism is indeed a fault to be given a wide berth by all women in command of others. It is always a sign of weakness, and therefore, to a certain extent, of unfitness for office. Justice must be dealt all round with an even hand, and the official who is just must be prepared to run the gauntlet of unpopularity, and to hold affection of secondary importance to respect. This she must have at all costs, and, possessing it, the best results will accrue not only to the institution at large, but also in regard to the individual members of the nursing staff—whose interests she has at heart quite as keenly as the officer who bids for popular favour. She may then rest assured that she has secured the "greatest good of the greatest number," which is a much more desirable end to attain than the personal affection of a few.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)