

## Probation Days in the Early Eighties.

By MACK ALL.

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At 5.30 in the morning the Night Superintendent touched my shoulder and said:—

"It's time to get up, Nurse All, and Matron says you are to go on duty in the fever house this morning."

Before I had come to Z Hospital my relations understood that I was not to do fever nursing. But I had learnt so much discipline in the fifteen hours I had been on duty that if I had been told to go across to the fever hospital on my knees I would have made the attempt.

The Night Superintendent took me across the garden, which was covered with snow, and gave me some hot tea in the kitchen. Then we went to a ward with four beds in it. The patients all looked queer and uncanny in the dim light. I was introduced to the nurse in this ward, who gave me instructions "to keep the patients quiet, and not allow any of them to attempt to sit up, or get out of bed." As soon as the nurse left the ward, a man with a flushed face and very bright eyes greeted me as "Jane," and promised me a new dress if I would get him "pig's cheek and cabbage for breakfast." The man in the next bed was dazed but conscious, and he begged me for "the love of God" to give him a drink of hot tea. The other men were asleep, the heavy death-like sleep of men in the midst of enteric fever. The nurse returned with tea and milk in "feeders," and I asked if the patient might have the hot tea he wished for.

"Hot! certainly not!" she exclaimed. "Never take orders from patients, and never give them anything on your own responsibility."

It was by following such curt advice that I learnt my work and gained favour with the Nursing Staff.

I won the goodwill of the patients in a different way, and by so doing learnt that "praise as well as blame is sometimes undeserved."

Sunday is often the busiest day of the week in hospital. In the afternoon patients' friends are allowed to visit them, and I was left in charge of a ward with directions to see that no food or drink was brought in. The visitors had to pass the hall porter, and be interviewed by the Staff Nurse before they reached my ward. An honest-looking woman came up to me smiling.

"I am Pat McCrea's mother," she said. "How is he the day, nurse darlin'?"

"You can see him directly," I replied. "Have

you anything in the way of food with you for him?"

"Faith, I have not then, nurse," she exclaimed, in a hurt tone, "as I tould the porter I wouldn't be thinkin' of bringing mate until a gran' place like this, where he can ate and drink of the best."

I was a little suspicious, and asked her if she knew what was the matter with McCrea, she did, so I impressed on her that a crumb of solid food might kill him, and feeling I had done my duty I let her pass. I felt it was not kind to watch the "Good-byes" of the patients' visitors, and I turned away when Pat's mother bent over him. A few minutes later the Staff Nurse announced that the "visitors time was up" and going over to Pat's bed she drew from under his mattress a large currant cake and a bottle of whisky.

"Now, McCrea, your visitors in future must bring a permit from the House Surgeon," she said quietly, and handed the cake and bottle to the woman, who had grown very red in the face, and angry.

"Sure ye are bein starved to death," she cried. "Come away wid me, an' I'll soon cure ye." But Pat turned away with something between a groan and a chuckle, and the woman departed in tears. Then I was sent to Sister's room and reprimanded. When I returned to the ward the patients made much of me, Pat was the most distressed.

"Och, sure nurse, I'm sorry to get ye into trouble," he said, "I was obliged to ye for turnin' yer eyes away that minit." I assured him I had no idea he would take such an advantage of my action, but he only smiled.

"I know ye did it a'purpose, nurse," he insisted, "but sure that's no mother of mine, anyway, an' I don't care I niver see her face again."

All the patients in the ward were convalescent typhoids, and they complimented me on my good heart and sympathy, and hoped I would never get like the other nurses, "who would not give a fellow a biscuit without the doctor's consent not for all the Queen's jewels. Yes! they were hard, the old nurses, not like human beings at all, but I had the soft, sympathetic heart, an' might God presarve me." Here the patients were wrong, I felt I had no time for sympathy, the patients were just animated machines that kept me running up and down stairs, fetching and carrying from morning to night.

Next afternoon I was off duty, and I would have lain down and had a long rest if I had not been told that I must go out when not on duty. As I limped up a street near the hospital, I saw a notice outside a church door, announcing

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