

to the cemetery—the distance was about a mile and a-half—the road lay along the broad high street and up a steep slope to the hillside, where she was to be buried amongst her people.

As we stood by whilst her relations and friends lowered her, according to the Scotch custom, into her grave, I looked across the little town to the hills beyond and above, some still flanked with snow, and I understood. Isla Stewart belonged to the hills, and she had come back to the hills to rest.

She had played a fine part in life's game; she had used her talents and her share of life well; for twenty-three long years she had worthily represented the great hospital of which she was Matron—but now she had come home again! We left at peace on the hillside a generous woman—one of the world's best and most conscientious workers, of whom might well be quoted the words she herself used when speaking of our late Queen: "She feared God and knew no other fear."

For the high courage with which she remained "on duty" to the end was typical of the woman. Through all her life she held to a grand conception of what was expected of her, of a standard she might not fail. And this, without any straining or effort; it was inborn, natural, unaffected, part of her being. In all her public life appears this serene disregard of difficulties and dangers. Some things might have to be avoided because they were inexpedient, but never because they were difficult or dangerous.

She was a loyal friend and an honest foe—straight always.

Her sense of justice was great, but her mercy greater. None had a more kindly, tolerant sympathy for human frailty, her charity was boundless; she had a clear brain, but a large heart.

Life for her was glad; she never pretended that her wine was poisoned or her corn milked; she enjoyed, and she wished others to share her joy.

She would have succeeded in any calling, but having devoted herself to her profession, she threw herself wholeheartedly into its advancement and organisation, and spent herself and her talents freely in its service, utilising to its last ounce her enormous capacity for work.

Large minded, she was singularly free from petty jealousy, and had a most generous appreciation for the talents and successes of others; there was no small or mean trait in her being.

She faced the inevitable with dignity and courage, and bore herself to the end as became her name and her position.*

M. M.

AN EXAMPLE OF DUTY AND COURAGE.

When the history of contemporary nursing is written, Miss Isla Stewart will be found amongst the great hospital Matrons who created the profession of nursing by their example and precept. Mrs. Elizabeth Fry and Miss Florence Nightingale inaugurated the movement with high ideals and first-rate judgment. They were followed by tactless persons who brought discredit on a good cause by wilfulness and wrongheadedness. Miss Stewart came later, and occupied a prominent position just at the time when her remarkable talents were capable of producing the best fruit. Miss Ethel Manson, now Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, came to St. Bartholomew's Hospital from the London Hospital in 1881, reorganised the nursing school, prepared the way, and set things in order for the advent of Miss Stewart. It is to the credit of Mrs. Fenwick and Miss Stewart at St. Bartholomew's Hospital that they saw the necessity, made the opportunity, for better education and better training for the nursing staff, and effected the change gradually and almost imperceptibly.

Miss Stewart combined in herself great teaching power with first-rate administrative capacity, and she had full scope to use her ability. All her changes were carried out gradually, and she had been several years at the hospital before she changed or added to the rules which she found in existence when she was appointed. But if the changes were gradual they were none the less important. The length of training, the hours of duty and of leisure, the routine by which every nurse was enabled to take the greatest possible share in each part of her course, all received anxious thought and were modified in the most practical manner. Finality was never reached, because to the last Miss Stewart maintained an open mind. She was always ready to receive suggestions from those in whom she had confidence, and if the ideas approved themselves to her, she adopted them. Her school of nursing, therefore, was always progressive, and as her rule was mild and just, she gradually made it worthy of the great charity to which it was attached. Her pupils attained distinguished positions at home and abroad, and inculcated her methods on succeeding generations. The banquet given to her by the Matrons' Council in 1908, and the reception she received at the International Congress of Nurses last year, gladdened her heart, for they were proofs of her far-reaching influence and of her personal popularity. Miss Stewart was more than a great Matron. She was a pioneer, creating a new profession, yet, unlike many

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)