

"outside the big London hospitals, like dock labourers waiting for a job. They were summoned to the wards as exigency demanded, and combined scrubbing and nursing as required." What wonder then, that the work was counted of no repute? And who are we to decry the difficulties that had to be encountered by those who sought to better such a condition of things?

I will not weary you by a repetition of those facts which have now become history regarding the first inception of nursing as a profession for refined and educated women. You are all thoroughly conversant with the story that has been in a way familiar to us from childhood of how Florence Nightingale and her band of workers brought sweetness and light out of the darkness and horrors of the Crimean war. It was a romance that fired many a young girl's imagination, inspiring her with the ambition to follow in those brave footsteps. Lately, echoes of the story have come freshly to our ears with all the forcefulness of a voice from the grave, newspapers and magazines alike vying with one another in glorifying the past, and offering incense to the memory of the "Lady with the Lamp."

Some of us are rather too ready to think that after the Crimean war, hospitals at once resolved themselves into models of order and skilled nursing, and that they have continued so ever since. Not so. Cleansing the Augean stable is never anything but a Herculean task, and the unpleasing fact remains that "Florence Nightingale walking the Scutari hospitals initiating nursing reforms in the distant East was a heroine, but Florence Nightingale putting her finger on the plague spots at home was by no means so popular." The glamour had departed. People are not always so anxious to remedy abuses when they exist in their own immediate surroundings, as when they are at a distance too great to be personally inconvenient. The mote in our brother's eye has ever been more apparent to us than the beam in our own. When nurses grumble at hospital rules to-day, greatly modified though their stringency may be, they little realise the appalling necessity that existed for such rules when they were first made. They do not think how difficult it must have been all at once to upset the conventions and established traditions of a century or two, to evict the unfit, set up proper ideals of honourable upright conduct, teach right methods of caring for the sick, and to enforce such rules when made. It was no wonder that little or no off-duty time was given when nurses could not be trusted to employ their leisure in proper ways of recreation: that supervision was carried to the point of espionage over persons who would not work well

unless under the immediate eye of authority: that orders had to be given in the form of stern commands, and enforced by threats of punishment for those who would only obey, as it were, at the point of the sword. Application forms at some hospitals, for probationers, even in the nineties, still required that "a candidate must be able to read and write," and it was not till then that a certain framed and glazed set of rules was removed from a dormitory wall, one of which rules set forth plainly that "nurses must not borrow money or clothes from the patients!"

This shows what sort of women were expected to apply for the post of nurse, and also indicates faintly the hard lot of those more gently born and bred who elected to live under conditions that must have been exceedingly galling to them. And why did they do so? Not because, as modern probationers may think when listening to stories of bygone days from older nurses, they were "poor spirited things who could not stand up for themselves," although you may say scornfully, "I know I would not put up with such a life, and I can't imagine why *they* did!" No; but because they know that only by conforming to the same rules as the rest, could they hope really to influence and reform them. They knew, too, that the need was great for real workers, and that if they did not persevere, the care of the sick might again fall into the hands of the unfit. One cannot speak of cowardice in the same breath with such people as these. In most cases, they had left their homes in spite of bitter opposition on the part of parents and friends in order to give up their whole lives to the service of the sick. Surely, they showed the truest bravery, the most real altruism, a genuine daily offering and sacrifice of their natural inclinations and habits in accepting their hard conditions of life, bowing their necks to the yoke of an iron discipline, and exhibiting by so doing the essential qualities of self-restraint, loyalty, endurance, devotion to a high ideal, that characterise the true Christian gentlewoman.

The path has been smoothed since then. Many rough places have been made so plain that sacrifice in the same degree, of the ordinary comforts of life, is no longer required of a nurse, but the lessons of bravery and true humility remain still to be learned from the example of many a nineteenth century nurse, who was not too proud to submit to authority, and esteemed the privilege of serving as sufficient recompense.

The nurse of 1910 would think herself hardly used were she not allowed to go out during her off-duty time without first asking leave and

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