

her experience. Heresy? Of course, it is the rankest heresy.

Probably my American friends know some turkey-superintendents, too. But those whom I met were different, and I will tell you why: they knew their work.

And not only did they know it; they knew how to do it. Nothing impressed me more than the quiet sense of power which those dear women gave me. They were masters of the situation by reason of their minds and their hearts, and so there was no need to make a parade. They maintained discipline finely, but *they respected* their nurses and their probationers, and they treated them with a charming courtesy which brought its own return. They seemed to be full of the desire to train and educate the mental, moral, and professional part of their nurses, remembering that they too were nurses, that they too had had to struggle upwards towards the light, that they too had had their failures in training, and had not yet reached perfection. It was the real spirit of motherly training. And the keynote of it was self-respect and respect for others; no strutting alone upon the compost-heap for the committee to look at. They took counsel with their ward sisters, and discussed difficult points on an equality, and remembered that, with all this, they were the masters of the situation.

Necessarily these many advantages in training and the more liberal-minded system of education have a marked influence on the individual nurse. She would be indeed a poor creature were it otherwise. One of my delightful Matrons with whom I was discussing the ethical and ideal side of nursing education said quickly: "Oh, I should never keep a sister who could not see her way to join the Alumnae Association. If she could not take sufficient interest in the Hospital to do *that*, she could not be of much use." I noticed that the nurses welcomed their Superintendents, spoke to them naturally and smilingly, and seemed at ease with them.

The work, of course, is severe. In the first place the demands on the candidate-nurse are much higher than they used to be. The whole high school course or its equivalent is quite a usual condition of entrance, together with a firm foundation in anatomy, physiology, chemistry, biology, and dietetics. Both during the probationary period and the junior, intermediate, and senior years the instruction given is thorough, and far more closely related to the scientific and ethical side of the work than is, I fear, common with us. Unfortunately, as with us, hours are too long, and too much of the instruction has to be given in the evening,

after work in the wards is over. Taken as a whole, the training of our American sisters in the good hospitals seems to me to be more intelligent, more individual, more of a definite training of the mind than is the habit with us.

One matter of great importance to the health of nurses in training is coming to be recognized there—the necessity of "vacation relief nurses." Most of us know what it means when the holidays begin and the wards are worked with fewer nurses. We have often been almost driven to death. I well remember having to work 18 hours on end for over a fortnight daily, besides being called up in the night, because one of our staff was away. The system of vacation relief nurses alters all that.

Two things stand out in my mind as affecting the condition of hospital nursing over there. One is the refrigerator attached to every ward as a matter of necessity, supplied with artificial cold by a common engine. What a boon and a blessing!

And then a much greater blessing—the magnificent possibility of getting almost all patients into the open air, sometimes for months together. In one hospital the children's ward had been closed for five or six months. Think of the opportunities for healing; think of the ridding of the wards of all microbes during the interval. Life in the open air becomes a routine treatment.

Space fails me, or I could tell you of the greater variety of feeding of typhoid patients, of the net-protected beds of children suspected of diphtheria, of the beautiful perfection of the marble sanitary chambers. Why call them lavatories when they are not intended for washing purposes? Of many a clever invention, many a handy dodge—but then I should want a volume.

Why, I have not even told you that I saw in the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston the room in which ether was first administered for an operation, performed by a gentleman in a costume which no self-respecting theatre-sister would allow within her sacred precincts, of course.

No, nor how I found a baby, one of triplets, comfortably lying out on the window-sill at the Sloan. Nor yet how I found *one* imperfection at the Rockefeller, which is the envied of all others for its magnificent appointments. Nor how its Superintendent drives and mends her own motor car.

And as to the seamy side, which is the part some naughty people, and naughty papers too, always want to know about their neighbours—well, if *you* want to, go and see for yourself.

ALBINIA BRODRICK.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)