

## MATRONS IN THE PAST.

### THEIR EVENING UNIFORM.

"Oh! there's a deal of my grandmother's cuckoo in all this talk about the higher standards of nursing in the past," said a Modern Matron. "I believe we matrons are as good, if not better, than ever we were."

"That may be," I answered, "but with a



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difference. In my day we wore uniform even at evening functions, and very charming was the effect."

Then I rummaged in a box, and brought out the photograph of two matrons taken in Dublin in the eighties. "There you can see how we appeared," I said, passing it to her.

"I grant you they are quite the right thing," observed the Modern Matron.

"Yes, I introduced the costume when matron of Bart's. The dress was simple in make, just a gathered skirt and bodice—made of rich black *gros grain* silk—a very dignified material, which any self-respecting grandmother would despise in these times, white cap very lacy, and plain cuffs and collars. Many of my pupils adopted it for evening wear. Here please observe the faces of these matrons. Are they not earnest and sweet? Faces which in past centuries might have been half hidden by a coif and hood—faces of women with a vocation."

"Why an evening uniform?" inquired the Modern Matron.

"Thereby hangs a tale. I will tell you. I began work at Bart's in 1881, and work was very arduous in those days. 'Matron' thought nothing of a sixteen-hour day, ending after a night round at 2 a.m., and the sisters and nurses were often on duty for fourteen hours at a stretch. Why not a little pleasure, I thought. Let us have a Christmas Party. The Treasurer agreed, so the first festive gathering took place in the Great Hall (and has been an annual function from that time till now). Theatricals, music, a reception of 500 people gathered together, all devoted to the old hospital. Everyone was delighted—the official pillars of the hospital, including the matron, received the guests. The matron, dressed in white satin and filmy lace, moved around on the arm of very handsome old Dr. Martin, and was introduced to many supporters of the great charity (many to become kind friends). It was a very novel and delightful occasion—its tradition has continued unto this day."

"But that is not the soul of the story?" smiled the Modern Matron.

"No, that had to do with white satin," I confessed.

"Becoming no doubt?"

"A matter of taste."

"Well—tell—"

"A story reached me which gave me cause for thought. I had a friend at St. Thomas', a mimic and very full of fun. She paid me a visit.

Ha! Ha! she laughed, we have heard of that white satin. Matron told us at dinner. She was very wroth. 'Fancy me in white satin,' she exclaimed.

We did.

Then we laughed.

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