

Matron, equally responsible on a *small* scale. The Matron holds the reins of government, and the obedience of the Sister is due to *her alone*.

The Hospital is very similar to a regiment of soldiers. The gradations of rank are alike; each officer has some subordinate, who is to a certain extent under their authority, but only as *deputies*.

It would be impossible for the Matron to surperintend so many Nurses, so the Sister is her deputy. As a superior officer, the obedience is due to *her* really by courtesy, the Sister having no authority beyond a reprimand. She has no power either to discharge or dismiss her to any other Ward, or to make any alterations in her rules. So we may consider that a Sister is in place of mistress to a Nurse, and must exact obedience. Each Nurse has a Ward, and she is at the head of it; the Probationers are practically under her, and they in their turn must submit to orders from their superior officer, the Nurse. Being the *lesser*, it is much better for these to do so, as the Nurses are able to teach them a great deal, or to make it very disagreeable for them. The Probationers are being constantly moved from Ward to Ward, and their obedience is due to the Sister of wherever they are placed only, no other Sister having any control whatever. The more submissive a Probationer is, the better will be her training; in fact this is a rather unpleasant part to some, as the Nurse is frequently inferior in everything but knowledge. But that alone gives her the superior position, and the Nurse's authority is supported by the Sister, and through her the Matron. We have now gone through the ranks of Hospital life, showing that unquestioning obedience is due from all, and *where* it is due. There only remains the Matron, the head of this army of workers. In looking over the many and various employments of women, whether from choice or necessity, in no other class is so much power vested as in the Matron of a large Hospital. Her will is law, her sway is absolute; she alone is responsible to the Committee for all connected with Nursing and household arrangements.

The love of power is so grafted in us that when allowed such an unlimited exercise it becomes morbid, and, like many diseases, if fostered instead of checked, it grows malignant, and its own poison at last destroys it. It seems to me that Nature's law for women is more subjection; it was ordained that she should be the weaker vessel; this, like other laws, must be obeyed, even if modified, or bad will be the result. Even with a moderately limited power the position of Matron is great responsibility, and her powerful influence is felt to a very wide extent. She can, by acts of kindness and unswerving justice, be looked upon

as a guide, counsellor and friend, and so win the obedience and life-long respect of her subordinates; or she may become the despotic tyrant, at whose approach all tremble, and in whose presence truth and honesty fear to assert themselves. She is recklessly walking over a volcano that will soon burst, and she will have then to render an account of her stewardship. Some committees place very little authority in the hands of their Matron; there is possibly a ladies' committee who manage the affairs of the Institution, the Matron being of course a mere cipher, and is generally selected from an inferior position, and the question of obedience is not considered necessary—in fact, never permitted to arise. Other Boards of Management place such unlimited power at the Matron's disposal that her arrogance and despotism are boundless, and the committee gradually recognise the fact of their own utter insignificance. Both of these extreme cases show some rule is being broken. There must be subjection; it is unalterable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. The Matrons I have described are not simply ideal; were a little more power given to one, and a little less to another, both would be admirable. To be in power one must have obedience from subordinates, and when in power it is a duty to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and show obedience to the rules made by the Committee, and which every Matron is bound to obey.

Just to sum up the obedience due in a few words—it is usually due *from* the person hired to the person who hires services. This in a Hospital is the Matron; she *must* employ deputies who expect the same as to herself, but the obedience of every member of the working is due to the Matron. And her obedience is without doubt due to the committee of management, who hire her services, and who by law are styled "her masters."

I have tried to explain as my opinion that the three motive powers on which the wheels of the world move always have been, and will be for ever, "Law, Obedience, Subjection."

I shall conclude my remarks with a few more lines from Martin Tupper (which seem very suitable for this subject), on "Humility":—

"Humility is the softening shadow before the stature of excellence, and lieth lowly on the ground, beloved and lovely as the violet. Humility is the fair-haired maid that calleth Worth her brother; the gentle, silent Nurse that fostereth infant virtues. As when a blind man is nigh unto a rose, its sweetness is the herald of its beauty, so, when thou savourest humility, be sure thou art nigh unto merit. Humility is the queen among the graces, for she giveth Him occasion to bestow."

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