

these organs, the nervous system and its diseases, diphtheria, influenzal pneumonia, typhus, trench fever, malaria.

Barbara, in common with most new probationers, was photographed at the earliest possible moment, so we have Uncle Luke's letter:—

"Thanks for the photograph. I agree. The pattern of cap adopted by the authorities of your hospital is most becoming. By the way, do you realise that you have to thank St. Paul for it? It was he who laid it down that a woman must never have her head uncovered in the congregation, or whatever it was. In olden times a hospital was a 'religious' institution—a sort of nunnery; and as a result of St. Paul, no woman was allowed to be about the place without a covering to her head. In theory, you are a sort of nun; a woman dedicated to a religious life; and, in practice, if you are a *good* nurse, you are so dedicated. A conscientious nurse lives a highly religious life, even if, like you, she smokes far too many cigarettes, and seldom goes to church.

"That 'religious atmosphere' has disadvantages to be sure (of course by 'religious' I mean conventual). It is the cause of the very archaic rules of discipline that are prevailing in hospital, and against which, if I were a nurse, I should kick. You have discovered already, I have no doubt, that the Matron is a solitary person who leads the sort of life one would expect a minor goddess to live. She is the modern equivalent of the mediæval Abbess or Prioress, and, as a rule, she is exceedingly terrifying. I have never been able to discover how people become Matrons of Hospitals. It is difficult to believe they began as junior probationers and worked their way up. Yet how else do people become Matrons? You ought to enquire of your present Matron; but I don't advise it. Matrons do not, I understand, encourage junior probationers to ask flippant questions. Probably you would be excommunicated, or laid under an interdict, or subjected to something else equally disconcerting. Assuredly your punishment would be ecclesiastical in character, and, consequently, exceedingly unpleasant. The Church always did understand the art of dealing severely with the impious."

Here are some words of wise advice to Barbara from "Uncle Luke":—

"Don't be scornful of the out-patient mother. She often is a rather rough customer, but she is 'all right inside,' as she would put it if asked to do so. Treat her kindly and you will find that under her rugged shell is a very charming and very satisfying kernel. Yes, I mean that. I have received more real kindness from rough ladies of the slums than I can ever hope to repay.

"Don't waste your time in the Out-Patient Department. The illnesses and the injuries presented to you there are interesting even though many of them are trivial. The men, women and children—particularly the women and children—

are much more than merely interesting. They are absolutely vital to you in your training. It is now that you have a chance of getting right close up against human nature in the rough. Don't throw your chance away. Later on, when you are a Ward Sister or a District Nurse, or, still more, a nurse in private practice, you will succeed or fail just as you have, or have not, real sympathy with other people."

"If you don't cut the word 'neurotic' out of your vocabulary you will never become a really good nurse. I gather that there are a number of people in your ward suffering from 'nerves,' and that you and your fellow-nurses are fed up, and inclined to be scornful.

"Now look here. . . . At present you know just nothing of the working of the human mind and the human body, but you *think* you know a lot. Yet you . . . imagine when you have labelled some unfortunate 'neurotic' you have fixed him, and can set out to make his life miserable with easy consciences. It won't do. It very much won't do. The 'neurotic' is an ill person, and he needs, very badly, skilful and sympathetic treatment. You nurses put him in the same class as the malingerer. You say to him that he can become quite normal whenever he pleases. He can't. He very much can't. That is his trouble."

"There are plenty of matrons and plenty of sisters who are the salt of the earth; women who spend themselves in caring for their patients, and in striving to persuade their probationers to be even as they are. They make their presence felt by their goodness. Always are they unselfish. Never are they egotistical. And they are very keen on discipline. Their hospitals and their wards run smoothly, like those bicycles which are supplied with 'the little oil-bath.'"

Uncle Luke writes much more which is worth reading. Read it.

M. B.

## FRESH AIR.

Sheila was aged five, and looked with surprise and wonder at the hospital nurse who had arrived suddenly because mummie was ill.

Sheila soon discovered that the nurse was able to smile often, and so a friendship sprang up between the two. It was Sheila's own idea that her new friend was to be "Auntie" Nurse, just to differentiate between this and her own nurse.▼

One day Sheila saw the windows being opened and, of course, said, "Why do you open the windows, Auntie Nurse?" receiving the practical reply: "To let the fresh air in, my dear child." That same evening Sheila was allowed to go with Daddie into the garden, and soon tiring of watching him at work with his roses, ran to open the gate. However, Daddie said "No," and then, in her most coaxing voice the little maid said: "But, Daddie dear, I *must* open the gate to let the fresh air in."

"EVA."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)