

THE
BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, REGISTERED NURSE.

No. 1,774.

SATURDAY, APRIL 1, 1922.

Vol. LXVIII

EDITORIAL.

CHIEF NURSE.

So kind, so duteous, diligent,
So tender, over his occasions, true,
So feat.

Shakespeare.

Several times of late our post bag has contained letters which have made us realise the lasting influence which a good Matron exercises over the probationers who pass through the Nurse-Training School of which she is the head, an influence which is felt not only by those upon whom it is directly exercised, but through them upon succeeding generations of nurses.

Here is a sample of our letters:—"I'm glad I went to Bart.'s in 1908. I can still see Miss Isla Stewart as she addressed us junior nurses; she *did* make one feel nursing was the grandest profession in the world! 'Always remember you are women, always remember you are nurses.'"

No better definition of what a Matron should be has ever been given than that by Miss Florence Nightingale, who has laid down that the Matron should herself be "the best nurse in the hospital, the example and leader of her nurses in all that she wishes her nurses to be, in all that training is to make her nurses."

And when we wish to find out what are the qualities which every nurse should possess, and which should be exhibited pre-eminently by the Matron or Chief Nurse, we turn for guidance to the same authority, who tells us: "A really good nurse must needs be of the highest class of character. It need hardly be said that she must be (1) chaste in the sense of the Sermon on the Mount: a good nurse should be the Sermon on the Mount in herself; (2) sober in spirit; (3) honest; (4) truthful; (5) trustworthy;

(6) punctual to a second, and orderly to a hair; (7) quiet yet quick, quick without hurry, gentle without slowness, discreet without self-importance, no gossip; (8) cheerful, hopeful; (9) cleanly to the point of exquisiteness, neat and ready; (10) thinking of her patient and not of herself, 'tender over his occasions or wants, cheerful and kindly, patient, ingenious and feat.'"

That is what Miss Nightingale expected every nurse to be as a matter of course, and from the Matron or Chief Nurse she expected a particularly perfect demonstration which would be a model to her subordinates.

On more than one visit to America we have been particularly struck with the aptness of the American Matrons in fulfilling Miss Nightingale's ideal of their position as Chief Nurses. The discipline in the hospitals is not one whit less effective than in our own, but the distance between the Matron and the nurse is much less. The former frankly realises and accepts her position as Chief Nurse and, while possessed of a strong professional pride, fulfils Miss Nightingale's ideal of being "without self-importance." There are Matrons in this country also—we number many amongst our personal friends—who in their conception of the duties of their office, and the manner in which they discharge them, strive to fulfil Miss Nightingale's ideal; but the general tendency is to maintain much more personal state than is the case with our American colleagues.

Of this we are sure, that for Matrons to regard themselves as a superior class apart is wrong in spirit and in practice. They can best demonstrate their right of place by coming freely into contact with other nurses, and proving, by comparison, their special fitness for their responsible duties.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)