

vince who chose to go in for it; the certificate qualified her for taking any professional post under the heading of "General Trained."

This examination was a much greater ordeal than the Hospital one, the study having to be very much more advanced, both for the written paper and the oral—this latter being held, as a rule, on the same evening, by three Doctors appointed annually by the Provincial Medical Council, who also set the questions for the paper. These men would come to the Hospital (where the examination was always held), and after they had corrected the papers they then called the candidates to the lecture room, three at a time, when they, each in turn, questioned them on different subjects. After the last of the nurses had returned from this ordeal, there was a period of an hour or more of suspense, while they waited for the marks to be totalled up by the examiners. It was often past midnight before the list was handed to the Matron, when a circle of anxious faces would gather round her, as she read the names of the successful candidates."

The question of the early washing of patients comes under discussion. A patient who had been sleeping badly complained that the night nurse had wakened him to wash him. "As a result of the complaint the Head-in-Chief came down on the Matron like a sledge-hammer, with the order that no patient in any ward of the hospital was to be washed before 5 a.m. This command in a busy ward was almost impossible of obedience; for instance, later on, on my return to this Hospital, I was in charge of a ward where, for a time, there were fifty patients, out of which number there were eleven or twelve full washings, while another eleven or twelve patients would have to have basins carried to them. Fifty pulses and some respirations had to be taken, in addition to the temperatures. There were several dressings to be done; in some cases an early drink of milk or tea. The ward had to be tidied and a lengthy report written by seven-thirty a.m."

We quite agree that one or even two night nurses cannot get through all this work in two and a half hours at the end of a busy night. But we do not think they should be asked to do so. It is a question of organisation, and some of the washings should be done by the day nurses. We are of opinion that 5 a.m. is too early to begin washings, and 6 o'clock is much better. That this can be arranged we know from practical experience.

Miss Ayliff has the enthusiasm of a really good nurse for medical work. "I have always preferred medical work to surgical, for I contend that in surgical work you have but a limb or a wound to deal with, while in a case of acute illness the whole constitution is affected, and has to be rebuilt before a patient becomes fully convalescent. In a case of enteric fever, for instance, one watches the course of the disease through its different stages: the forming and sloughing of the intestinal ulcers; in a case of pneumonia, the

blocking of the air cells with fluid, and so on. Each disease, to a keen nurse, has its special interest, and when a severe case of illness has been nursed back to health she has the same satisfaction in surveying her completed article as an artist has in his finished picture. The picture, however, goes down to posterity as a lasting memento of the artist's talent; but there is nothing to perpetuate the nurse's talent except the gratitude of her masterpiece."

In a chapter headed "Slavery," the author describes her training in midwifery in a London Maternity Hospital, and writes: "I now come to that part of my training which I would gladly blot from the page of remembrance, were I able to do so. The life which the nurses led in this Institution struck at the very foundation of one's ideas of justice between employer and employed."

Of the patients she writes: "Amongst these mothers of London's poor, one met with many of the truest and most warm-hearted of women. Never was there a word of complaint by any of them against her lot in life, and never a murmur against the treatment received as an inmate of a Training School, where the patients' treatment was continued for the most part through the night the same as it was through the day. Only on one occasion did I hear a mother say to her neighbour, 'When I go home, I shall have such a nice long sleep.'"

Of the strenuous work of the nurses she writes: "I was not the only nurse at that time who was worn out, for, on one occasion, when going to a bathroom, I found the door locked, and my attempts to open it wakened a nurse who had fallen asleep in her bath!"

"It was a soul-killing life, that would not have been livable for longer than the few months over which it extended; but we were gradually broken in to it, as it were, for each month was worse than the preceding one, with the exception of the last weeks, which were spent in district work. These in strenuousness were equal to the last month in Hospital, but in the district we enjoyed a certain amount of freedom in the method pursued in our work; to a certain extent we were our own masters."

While doing district midwifery, Sister Ayliff and her friend worked under a midwife whom they liked, and were billeted in a house near their work. The description is not attractive:—"We shared a bedroom on the first floor which opened on to a small balcony. The room in itself was fairly large, and would have been larger still, but for the fact that spread over the floor in one corner there was a huge pile of empty medicine bottles of all sizes, shapes and colours. The accumulation of dust on them was certainly ancient.

"So objectionable was this insanitary pile to me that I made a request to the Visiting Sister of our district that it might be removed. . . . I do not think she could have wanted the bottles herself, yet her answer was 'Leave them alone!'

"I wonder if that pile of bottles is still there." There is a warm tribute to the admirable

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)