

A GRIEVOUS LOSS.

MISS MILDRED HEATHER-BIGG, R.R.C., M.B.C.N.

When some few months ago the news of the serious illness of Miss Mildred Heather-Bigg became known to her many friends in the Nursing Profession, the unexpectedness of the announcement intensified the sorrow with which it was received. For it was difficult to associate with the idea of death one who always gave an impression of such abounding vitality; nevertheless the blow fell quickly, and on June 25th she passed to her rest, leaving with us a sense of loss too deep for words.

Gay, gallant, hospitable, and a most loyal friend, Miss Heather-Bigg had a charming and stimulating personality. In her training days she was for a time associated with University College Hospital, but it is with Charing Cross Hospital that she will best be remembered. As Sister there, during the Matronship of Miss H. Gordon, she passed on to hold the Matronship of the Cottage Hospital, Bromley, and the Chelsea Hospital for Women, and on the retirement of Miss Gordon was invited to return to Charing Cross as Matron, a position which she held with distinction throughout a difficult period of the hospital's existence. During the years of the war, the hospital, which was in the storm centre, received many of the injured in air-raids, and the sudden emergencies thus occasioned were dealt with by her with great resource, and it was at this time that she received the Royal Red Cross, and was made a Lady of Grace of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. She was also keenly interested in Nursing Education, and that given to the pupils at Charing Cross Hospital during her tenure of office was very thorough.

But great as were her services to Nursing as Matron of one of the large London Training Schools, it is in connection with the movement for the State Registration of Nurses, and her fearless advocacy of this reform, which she lived to see established, that she will long be remembered and held in honour. She associated herself actively with the pioneers, through the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland, the Society for the State Registration of Nurses, and the Central Committee for State Registration of Nurses, and no specious argument that "the time has not yet come," or "you cannot register character," moved her one whit. Her eyes were on the goal, and she was too clear-sighted, because too honest and honourable to be influenced by such reasoning.

On the death of Miss Isla Stewart, Matron of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and President of the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland, one person was obviously marked out to succeed her as President of the Matrons' Council, a position which demanded loyalty to standards and to the colleagues with whom she was associated.

Events proved the wisdom of the choice. She accepted office, and unswervingly held on her way, disturbed neither by assaults without, nor defection within the ranks of the movement which she knew to be founded on irrefutable principles, meeting the arguments of some less single-minded with straightforward courage, and always a glint of humour, a gift which helps its possessor over many rough

places, and she gained in an increasing degree the honour and respect of all who knew her.

When the British College of Nurses was founded two years ago, Miss Heather-Bigg at once became a Member, and took a great interest in its activities. We all remember how handsome she looked at our Annual Dinner in 1927.

On Wednesday in last week, a Solemn Requiem, at St. Alban's, Holborn, at which church Miss Heather-Bigg was a regular worshipper for many years, preceded the interment at Woking, when the celebrant was Father Bickersteth, and the vicar, Father Ross, conducted the service.

The coffin was covered by a handsome pall, and all around were placed lovely flowers, sent by those who knew and loved her. Besides those of her relatives and personal friends were the offerings of the Council, Matron, and Nurses of Charing Cross Hospital, the British College of Nurses ("In very loving Remembrance of Mildred Heather-Bigg, R.R.C., M.B.C.N.", from the President and Members of the Council of the College'), from the Royal British Nurses' Association, in which Miss Heather-Bigg had held the position of Vice-Chairman, the Matrons' Council of

Great Britain and Ireland (which sent a cushion of white flowers on which was the monogram of the Council in blue and its motto, "Cogito ergo sum" in red flowers), the Council of Chelsea Hospital, the Community of the Epiphany, the Companions of the Confraternity of the Resurrection, and many others.

The sequence chosen was the Dies Iræ, and the hymns, "Jesu, Lover of My Soul," and "They whom many a land divides," with the concluding verses:—

They whose course on earth is o'er
Think they of their brethren more,
They before the Throne who bow,
Feel they for their brethren now?

We, by enemies distressed,
They, in Paradise at rest;
We in battle sharp and sore,
They, at peace for evermore.

Doubt it not, the Saints above
Bend on earth the eye of love,
By their prayer and living word
Help to guide us, Blessed Lord.

The service concluded with the Dead March in Saul, ending on a note of triumph, and then, for the last time our friend passed through the doors of the church which she

had loved so well, and which had meant so much to her "in battle sharp and sore," and so on to Woking, the most beautiful of all the London cemeteries, where we left her amid the flowers, and the fine upstanding pines, typical of strength and endurance, "until the daybreak, and the shadows flee away," and "in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection."

Her professional record we leave to the verdict of history, sure that it will be appraised as honourable and honoured, but one last tribute we would lay at her feet. Our thanks for the clear purpose, the straight-dealing, the courage and loyalty which will for ever be associated with her name by "those made better by her presence" here on earth.

Amongst those present in the Church were Lady Bland Sutton (sister), Miss Cochrane (Matron, and representative of Charing Cross Hospital), Mr. Herbert H. Jennings (Chelsea Hospital for Women), Miss M. Breay and Miss A. M. Bushby (The British College of Nurses), Miss A. S.



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Lady of Grace of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

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