

"THE LITTLE RED BOOK."

Why, Oh! why, did I burn the "Little Red Book"? I realise now that it contained data of historic value in the evolution of the Nursing School of St. Bartholomew's Hospital and should repose on a crimson cushion in the Nurses' Library, open for the enlightenment and encouragement of all creators and reformers in their inevitable contest with the *status quo*.

Perhaps there are no little Red Books in use in the Matron's Department in these days of dictation and transcription, but in the eighties of the last century all the Sisters used these note books as an aid to memory and for official reports.

I found the special book to which I refer on my desk on my arrival as Matron, on May 1st, 1881. I signed my name in it, numbered 60 lines, and then put it under lock and key.

After a tour of the wards and presentation to all the members of the Nursing Staff (including the seven "extras" on night duty in their black chenille caps, one decorated with pink ribbon), I ventured to insert quite a few items opposite the numbers—urgent reforms which appeared necessary, with the intention of crossing them through with red ink when they had been attained. I may add that in time and after experience and due consideration, the 60 numbers were utilised—and with the exception of half a dozen—were duly crossed out as accomplished.

Amongst the things left undone were "The New Home for Nurses," "Reorganisation of Surgery," "Washing Dress for Sisters."

A FEW REFORMS ACCOMPLISHED.

In the forefront of reforms were inscribed:—

- "Extension of term of training from two to three years."
- "Matron to take part in Examination of Probationers, to award a third of marks for practical efficiency."
- "Prizes for Probationers."
- "Gold Medal for the best all-round examinee."
- "Demand high standard of general education and culture of Probationers."
- "Increase Nursing Staff by 60."
- "Washing uniform for Sisters and Staff Nurses."
- "Make night as well as day round of wards to come into touch daily with nurses at work, and the condition of patients."
- "Two nurses on night duty in each ward."
- "Inspire devotion to duty, no duty to be considered menial."
- "To present as pleasing an appearance as possible, patients appreciate it."

And so on.

THE GOLD MEDAL.

The length of training at Bart.'s in 1881 was a term of two years only, and it was not until 1884, when the first Class would have soon fulfilled a three years' term of training, that I began to move about the question of Prizes and the Gold Medal.

Serious thought had to be given to proposed innovations at Bart.'s in those days, especially with regard to the Nursing School; traditions of nearly 800 years' service to the sick were not to be violently disturbed, and the Medical Board was by no means feminist!

Matron would sit upon the Fountain any time from midnight to early dawn. Exquisite silence—only the whispering of the still. Night Sisters would flit in and out of Blocks—the measured tread of the Beadles conveying an urgent case to the wards failed to disturb the peace; and it might have been imagination, but was or was not a luminous shadow in a monk's habit the inspiration of the Gold Medal? In mortal life his aspirations were golden.

Why a Gold Medal? Numerous reasons.

Recognition of merit; stimulation of energy; professional pride; prestige. What not?

Anyway, right soon the powers that be should be interviewed. The first "power," the wisest and least obstructive of men—Mr. W. H. Cross, Clerk to the Governors—who knew and was trusted by them all. He quite approved (later his daughter Nellie won the coveted Medal); the Treasurer, Sir Sydney Waterlow, brilliant man of business—a little chat at lunch time, for which he utilised the Treasurer's House in those days; he promised support—he would consult the Almoners. He did and with success—as reported in the Minutes quoted by the Editor of *League News*.

We read in her reference to the Gold Medal:

"In this—the Silver Jubilee Year of the reign of our King—we have a double cause for celebration and deep thankfulness. Just 50 years ago, on January 22nd, 1885, from a Report to the Treasurer and Almoners of that day we learn:

"The Clerk laid before the Committee a letter he had received from Mr. Owen Roberts, Clerk to the Clothworkers' Company, stating that the Court of the Company had decided to offer during pleasure, three prizes of Five Guineas, Three Guineas, and Two Guineas, respectively, for the three best Probationary Nurses at the examination of St. Bartholomew's Hospital."

Then on December 31st, 1885:

"Referring to the offer of the Clothworkers' Company, reported to this Committee on January 22nd, 1885, to give Prizes to the Probationary Nurses of the annual value of Ten Guineas, the Treasurer reported that, having conferred with the Medical Officers charged with the instruction of the Probationers and with the Matron, he had come to the conclusion that such sum could be most advantageously appropriated in the following manner, that is to say—

"Two Prizes (one at each half-yearly examination) of a Gold Medal of the value of
£3 10s. £7 0 0

"Two Prizes (one at each half-yearly examination), of books to the value of £1 15s. £3 10 0

"An intimation having been received from the Clothworkers' Company that they assented to this appropriation, the same was approved by this Committee."

"So came into existence that treasured trophy of our training school—the Gold Medal—the first to have been established as an award to the nurse of her year who headed the list at the final examination for the Certificate of Nursing of St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

"Now, 50 years later, approximately 100 of our school have, with proper pride, worn that strenuously-earned decoration—the fortunate result of the progressive and great educational offer, when the Court of the Worshipful Company of Clothworkers gave tangible proof of their interest in the training of nurses.

"The encouragement evinced by the gift of books to the successful candidate who heads the list of the examination held at the end of the first year of training, can only be measured by applying the spirit of intuition; but there is ample evidence of the inspiration it has given to several of our members who have at the end of the third year earned the coveted Medal.

"In 1885 the first Gold Medallist was Miss Hannah Maria Turner, who became Sister of Martha Ward; and the prize of books was awarded to Miss Ellen Freeman (Ruskin's Works, four vols.), and she, in 1887, subsequently gained the Gold Medal.

"The origin of every great idea is the emanation of one single mind, and we know at that date there was such a mind at the helm of the Nurses' Training School—Miss Ethel Gordon Manson, Matron and Superintendent of

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