

## OBITUARY.

MARY GLADYS ALLBUTT, S.R.N. F.B.C.N.

"I should hate that Death bandaged my eyes and forebore  
And bade me creep past." —Robert Browning.

It was with deep regret we learnt of the passing of Mary Gladys Allbutt, S.R.N., on August 6th, who, for 15 years, was the Matron of Fulham Hospital, Hammersmith. During her matronship this hospital passed through a period of great development in serving the very busy and thickly populated district in which it stands. There is no doubt that Miss Allbutt took great pleasure and pride in this, but, for some half-understood reason, it is on her personality that we should like to dwell, perhaps because just as we are writing of her, they are laying her body to rest in a village churchyard. While she held her matronship the human side of Miss Allbutt was always apparent and we like to think of her receiving guests at some social function at her hospital or perhaps helping the nurses in organising refreshing activities outside the work of the wards. It might be the Christmas celebrations that claimed her advice and when, in some of their dramatic efforts, the nurses would plan a joke at Matron's expense no one appeared to enjoy it more than Miss Allbutt herself; she maintained a close spirit of friendship with her nurses and an interest in each individually.

To Miss Allbutt is due the foundation of what is to be regarded as the Nurses League of the Fulham Hospital—"The Bond of Tenders in the House of the Sick." This is a revival of a title used many years ago and it lent a sort of old-world distinction to her hospital league and, when one heard it, the longing would arise that we might have just a glimpse of that league of olden days—"tenders"—their very name suggests an ideal of gentleness towards the sick.

But Miss Allbutt's interests were not confined to her hospital, however full and happy her life there might be. She was fond of travel and literature, and her artistic feeling found an outlet not only in her beautiful needlework but in creative work of other kinds, as for instance some aspects of the activities—both inside and outside the wards of the hospital—in the league, for instance, to which we refer. Although not inclined to public speaking, she has, on occasion, given able addresses at the British College of Nurses, and hers was a familiar figure at the Council tables of the various nurses' organisations to which she belonged. There her empty chair will give a note of sadness when the time of meetings comes round again. Her counsel will be missed, for although she never spoke at great length nor sought to impose her opinions on others, those always had weight because of the recognition that, behind them, lay

reasoning, courage, progressive thought, kindness, a strong sense of justice and, added to these, a great loyalty to her principles and her colleagues.

Just before the commencement of war Miss Allbutt retired from the Matronship of her hospital and took a house in a lovely garden at Elstead, in Surrey. But it was not in idleness that she sought rest after the busy years at Fulham, and there were many evidences at her death of how she had won the hearts and friendship of the people of Elstead. She participated in many local activities, particularly in connection with the Red Cross movement there, for which she often lectured; its members formed a guard of honour at her funeral. Miss Allbutt also continued, after her retirement, her work as an examiner for the General Nursing Council. When suffering became her lot, and when her physicians gave their verdict on her illness, she accepted

this with a calm that made one of them remark: "May I be like her when my time comes." She told us of their verdict much as she would relate any other episode in her life—she "did not mind, her work was done, but she hoped she might have the summer in her garden." In great measure this last was granted to her, and we have memories of her awaiting her guests there under a shadowing tree with tea spread in readiness for our coming, near to a circle of crazy pavement into which she had, consciously or otherwise, blended flowers, in their setting of grey stone that all so harmonised in their soft pastel shades of mauve and pink, pale yellows and blues, and dull soft greens. On the air came the scent of pine trees that skirted her garden, and the song of birds. We talked of old, happy days, of the future, and but little of her sufferings. We like to think of her in that garden. There, amid the peace and the innocence of nature, she faced the great change that drew nearer, ever nearer, with courage and high spirit. Up to the last she would have no crutch; she would "die with her feet first," as an old



THE LATE MISS M. G. ALLBUTT, S.R.N., F.B.C.N.,  
Formerly Matron, Fulham Hospital, London.

saying has it. Nothing would they give her that might draw more quickly shadows about her mind and consciousness, however much less toilsome it might make the road. In full freedom of will she chose not to "creep past." Suffering is a deep mystery, and a Swiss poet and philosopher has said that when it comes blamelessly—(i.e., not as the result of a person's own misdeeds)—it has a mission that works into the future. Be that as it may, hers was borne with a calm dignity that could bring encouragement and peace to all about her. One of those who knew her best, one who also holds high responsibilities and experiences all the harassments that they bring, has said that, ever since she knew Miss Allbutt, that calm courage of hers had been a help and inspiration: "No matter how tired or worried I might be, a short interval with her seemed to give me fresh

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