

"I never knew such a humbug of a bird!" cried she.

"I never saw such a little simpleton of a hen," crowed he.

"Really, they are as good as a play! Are they not, dad?" applauded Violet. "Without understanding their bird-language, one can pretty well guess at all they are chattering about, the dears. So good-bye till evening. I'll watch for you then."

The wood-carver mutely nodded. He went towards the door. Then he turned back,

kissed Violet's brow, and still in silence passed out of the doorway. Two tears rose in Violet's eyes slowly. Still more slowly they brimmed over and rolled down her cheek. She knew what was in her father's mind. Perhaps one day soon, unless he grew much stronger, he would not be alive to come home to her. While he could, he longed to cherish his child.

Mr. Sweet briskly hopped on his slave's shoulder and inspected those tears with interest.

"Two big water-drops! I never saw so queer a sight! You and I can't make rain like that, wife. I'll taste one. Ugh! quite salt!"

He had given an impudent peck at Violet's face, looking so comical the while, with his head on one side, that his slave smiled, despite her grief.

"That's right!" sang Mr. Sweet. "Get to work, to work, both of you silly girls, and I'll sing to you." Which he did for an hour and more.

(To be continued.)



## THE LIFE OF A NURSE.

NOT very long ago I met a lady who had been a nurse in a big London hospital thirty years ago. She was one of the pioneers of the "lady nurses" of to-day. When I spoke pityingly of the hard work of

hospital nurses, she actually laughed. "Nurses to-day," she said, "do not know what hard work means. In my day the hours were much longer and the duties far

heavier. I have had a ward with thirty-eight beds in it to look after by myself many a time. The nurses with whom I worked were rough, ignorant, uneducated. The life of the nurses of to-day is smooth and easy compared with that I led."

My friend was a very exceptional woman; of good physique, excellent intelligence, unflinching energy, much ready tact and an excellent heart. But the strain of years of such heavy work broke her health.

All things go by comparison, and although the lot of the hospital nurse of our own times may be easy compared with that of the nurse of thirty or even of twenty years ago, yet it is far from being an easy one.

Long hours, hard work, great responsibility, few holidays; let all who think of taking up this occupation weigh these matters in the balance. On the other side of the scale there is an absorbingly interesting occupation, a regular life if a hard one, a position which opens to her many opportunities and the respect of all with whom she comes in contact, provided that she fulfils her duties conscientiously.

So much is said nowadays about the necessity of feeling a vocation before we adopt any occupation in particular, but we do not all experience strong promptings to follow one particular pursuit; even if we do, we cannot always listen to them. In many cases people find themselves earning their living in the way they would least have expected, having been led finally by circumstances rather than by choice. There are so many hospitals and so many nurses are required in each that it is not likely all of them can have special vocations for the work. The average nurse just as often takes up her occupation because matters have been arranged for her as because she wishes for it. The only thing for her to do in this case is to carefully obey all directions and rules, to be very thoughtful and steady in her work, to make the most of all the bodily rest she can get and to do the best she can. If she does all this, she is often

just as successful in the end as the one who starts with a very strong inclination for the work and who has always felt such a desire to follow it as a profession that she will not hear of doing anything else. Those who profess the strong "vocation" have not always got strength to match it. The very ardour and interest which they bring to bear in their duties often wears them out and robs them of the needful sleep. Two of the most tactful, clever and devoted nurses I ever knew came to very sad ends from this cause. The keen interest with which they followed the progress of their patients brought on prolonged sleeplessness, which they sought to overcome by the use of sedatives. The one died from an overdose of morphia, the other was the victim of an attack of paralysis brought on by taking too much bromide.

Very sympathetic, tactful people are often highly strung and nervous, and the continual tension of the nerves affects the health. Under these circumstances the ceaseless routine of a nurse's work is particularly trying to the system. She must be up early and get to bed late, week in and week out. Does she allow herself to become over-anxious and worried over a particular case and to become exhausted, there can be no staying in bed to recover, no extra rest to make up for the strain on the over-tried nerves; all must go on just as usual. Over-sensitive people, then, had better adopt some other profession, for this will prove too great a strain on their health.

A successful nurse must be a happy mean between over-sensitiveness on the one hand and callousness on the other. She must be observant, full of tact, noiseless in her movements, orderly in her arrangements and able to exercise a gentle but firm control over the patient. Good nursing must be systematic, but for all that it cannot be reduced to a system. Occasionally one hears complaints of the hardness and want of sympathy shown by some nurses. If these complaints are reasonable and not exaggerated, the nurse is very much at fault. It is quite possible to be firm and sensible but kind as well, and if a nurse cannot manage this she is a bad nurse, and no amount of mere technical skill can ever make her anything else.

Again, a selfish and inconsiderate person will seldom make a good nurse for long. The routine of hospital work slightly veils personal idiosyncrasies, but in private nursing carelessness is sure to come to light.

A few months ago a nurse with excellent testimonials went from one of the big London hospitals to nurse a little boy in the north of England. The child had been taken ill while staying with his grandmother; the nurse was to do the nightwork, and one of the servants and the grandmother arranged to take the day nursing between them. On the second night after the nurse arrived the old lady went upstairs to see how the little boy was getting on, and found the poor child tossing about,

wakeful and in pain, much distressed with the glare and heat of an immense fire quite near his bed; the nurse was comfortably ensconced in her own bed fast asleep. It had never occurred to her that the old lady would have come upstairs in the night, and she thought she might safely go to bed. For such a gross neglect of her duties she was sent away the following day. It is to be hoped that cases like these are rare. It would certainly be unfair to condemn a large body because certain individuals are lacking in good qualities. There are over a thousand members enrolled in the British Nursing Association alone, to say nothing of the many who do not belong to this society.

It is certainly one of the greatest blessings of the day that one can obtain skilled attendance for the sick at a few hours' notice.

There are many amateurs who at the end of an illness have proved that they can be excellent nurses, but it is more than probable that whilst they were learning, the patient has suffered from their lack of knowledge, particularly if there has been no skilled hand to direct their efforts. This must have been very much more the case fifty years ago before Miss Nightingale paved the way to a more general knowledge of nursing. The different hospitals vary so much in the routine set down for nurses that it would be impossible for me to describe all. I will content myself with a short account of the work at two of them, selecting St. Thomas's and St. Bartholomew's.

Under all circumstances it is best to send in an application some time before the candidate wishes to begin her training; they are seldom in want of nurses at any of the principal hospitals, and so there is generally some time to wait after the application has been sent in. On a given date the matron interviews the candidates, who must each produce a certificate of general good health from the doctor who attends them. I know a nurse who presented herself for examination without a certificate, saying that as she had never needed a doctor she did not know to whom to apply. She was chosen. Happy is she who can do likewise.

At St. Thomas's hospital the selected candidates come on a month's approval, and then if they are considered suitable they become "probationers" and live in that part of the hospital known as the "Nightingale Home." This building and the fund for providing nurses in connection with it were founded in 1858 by public subscription as a personal testimony to Florence Nightingale in memory of her services to the sick and wounded during the Crimean War. The probationers in each ward work under a staff nurse, and the staff nurse works under a Sister. During the year of probation you are expected to get a general training, including most branches of sick nursing, and are required to work in the male as well as the female wards, and the medical wards as well



as the surgical. The probationer must do the dusting in the wards, wash the patients, make the beds and so on. At this hospital the first year's work is not so heavy as at some others, where they have to polish up the brass knobs of the beds, and to do much other housemaid's work, which here is left to the ward-maids. During this part of her training she learns to do dressings of every kind, to give hyperdermic injections, to wash the patients, to put on bandages, and many other things. The probationer must do her best to develop her powers of observation, as it is expected of a good nurse that she will notice the slightest change that occurs in the condition of a patient. It depends a great deal on herself whether she learns to do all these things intelligently, and a great deal also on the staff nurse and Sister under whom she works. Some nurses take far more trouble to teach these things thoroughly to the probationers under them than others. If the reason for everything done be told the novices, they will accomplish their work much more intelligently than if they learn it as a mere mechanical operation, and they will also be more accurate in the reports as to the patients' progress which they have to make.

The Sister in charge of a ward sends in a monthly report of the probationers under her care. Probationers are never on night duty. The ordinary probationer at St. Thomas's signs for four years' training at the hospital. In this case she has nothing to pay. But if she chooses to pay thirty pounds she need only sign for three years, and the course of work is slightly different; it includes, for instance, the attendance of lectures given by members of the staff on chemistry, nursing and physiology. If a probationer pays fifty pounds on entering, she need only sign for two years. The same arrangement obtains at King's College Hospital and at Guy's Hospital. Paying probationers are called "specials," and it is from the "specials" that the sisters are chosen.

"Sisters" are the heads of wards. The All Saints' Sisters of Mercy were the first ladies who nursed in hospitals, and it is from them that the expression has been adopted. It has no religious significance in the sense in which it is now used in hospitals.

At the end of nine or ten months all probationers have a practical *visà voce* examination, which is conducted by Dr. Sharkey. If she has made good use of her eyes in the wards, and made careful observations, she will be able to answer the questions asked. The following and similar questions have been asked:—

- 1.—What sort of complexion would you expect to find in aortic disease?
- 2.—Describe the pulmonary circulation.
- 3.—What are the symptoms of enteric fever?
- 4.—What are the symptoms of cardiac rheumatism?

This examination occurs just before the annual fortnight's holiday. If she is not successful, she does not get her "blue stripes," that is to say, she must continue to be an ordinary probationer and wear a lilac print uniform for another three months, instead of being privileged to adopt the blue striped dress of a regular nurse. To fail in this examination tells against an unfortunate one during the whole of her training. However well she may do later on, this troublesome fact will always be remembered against her. The whisper will go round from time to time, "she failed for her blue stripes."

After the holiday, supposing her to have been successful, she will be no longer in the Nightingale Home, but in the hospital. She will probably be put on night duty for a year. The night nurse's hours of work are from 9.30 P.M. to 8.30 A.M. She is at liberty on

leaving her work to go straight to bed if she feels inclined and get up again early in the evening at about 5.30 P.M. and go out for a walk; or she can go for a walk when she comes off duty and go to bed later. At mid-day the door of the "Night Nurses' House" is shut, and no one is allowed to disturb them. There is one night nurse to each ward and one night Sister to the whole hospital. The Sister in charge goes from one ward to another on her rounds.

It is greatly to be wished that subscriptions from the public would flow in with greater generosity, and so enable the hospital to provide a larger staff of nurses. There are twenty-eight beds in a ward, and if several of the patients are seriously ill and require a great deal of attendance, as often happens, the nurse is utterly worn out by the time her working hours are over.

After two years in the hospital one may be appointed day staff nurse, or possibly theatre nurse. The day staff nurse has to look after the patients, to instruct the probationers, and has the care of the ward linen. Or, if there is any case requiring separate nursing, she may be told off for that; or perhaps she may be sent to St. Thomas's Home to nurse the paying patients. The Home is a large building adjoining the rest of the hospital.

The salaries of nurses are small, but on the other hand their personal expenses are considerable. A probationer gets ten pounds and her uniform the first year. The second year she has twenty pounds and her uniform. At the end of this year a satisfactory nurse gets a bonus of two pounds, accompanied by a letter from the treasurer of the Nightingale Fund. This in itself is an excellent testimonial. The third year she gets twenty-four pounds. "Specials" get no salary the first year.

At St. Bartholomew's Hospital there is a Home for paying probationers, at which they can be received on paying a guinea a week, before they take up the regular probationer's work. There is a similar institution at the London Hospital. The hours of a "special," as she is called, are from 8.30 A.M. to 8 P.M., and two hours off are allowed in the middle of the day. You are allowed to remain there for three months, or longer if you like. Then there is a small examination similar to that which the ordinary probationer has to pass. Elementary physiology is required and questions are asked, testing the powers of observation of the candidate. Nurses sign papers binding them to work in the hospital for four years, but the training is over in three.

The work of a regular probationer begins at 7 A.M. She has to make the beds all round the ward with the staff nurse, and she may have to wash one or two patients, but the staff nurse washes most of them. Then she must polish up the brasses and clean out the lockers. This takes till ten o'clock; then she changes her dress and comes back clean and tidy. Then for the rest of the morning she assists in the ordinary nursing work in the ward; medical, surgical, or whatever it may be. No one is allowed to nurse in the diphtheritic ward under twenty-eight years of age, but with this exception, a probationer may be appointed to any ward. After about a year there is an examination. Two papers are given for this, one on surgical and another on medical nursing, and there is a practical "*visà voce*" on each as well. A considerable amount of physiology is required for this. If this examination is passed satisfactorily the "probationer" becomes a "staff nurse" and will continue so for two years. Now comes the final examination at which nurses gain their certificate. This examination is on a much larger scale than the one at the end of the first year, and is much more advanced. In this examination a gold medal is offered, and the one who gains it is made a Sister at the

next vacancy. There is not often an opportunity, as some of the Sisters remain in the hospital for so many years; some there at the present time have been at their work for fifteen and twenty years. Although this makes it hard for those who are waiting for the appointment, there is certainly more prestige about a nurse who remains at one place, instead of moving about from hospital to hospital as many do.

The fourth year of training is spent either at the private nursing home or in the hospital. The manner of spending this year is arranged when the articles are signed at the beginning of the training, according to the nurse's own choice.

Most of the big hospitals are prepared at any time to provide nurses for private nursing. This is a departure of recent years, as at one time nurses were only trained for the hospital routine, and were not supplied for private work. Many become so attached to hospital work that when the full training is over, they prefer to remain where they are. Those wishing to undertake private nursing generally join some nursing institution, such as "The London Association of Nurses," "The North London Nursing Institute," and many others. In these cases the institution gives a home to the nurses when out of work, and appropriates a portion of their earnings. Some prefer to undertake private nursing on their own account, but until a nurse is very well known and very highly recommended, this is a somewhat precarious method of earning a livelihood, particularly when one considers the expenses incurred; for, under these circumstances, permanent lodgings must always be maintained or patients will not know where to apply. Nurses who give satisfaction when nursing under well-known specialists, are seldom in want of employment, as the doctors are always glad to have those working under them on whom they can rely, and so recommend them from one case to another.

"The Nurse's Club," Southampton Street, Strand, which occupies commodious premises over the buildings of the *Hospital* newspaper, was founded, a little time back, by Miss Thompson, late matron of the hospital at Cairo. It is an excellent institution, worked in the most satisfactory way, and should be of the greatest benefit to nurses and other women workers, who have the privilege of joining. The entrance fee is a guinea to all members; the annual subscription is a guinea to nurses and two guineas to others. The rooms are charming, well furnished, light, airy and beautifully kept. The brilliant silver and snowy linen on the tables are things to be wondered at in such a dirty place as London. Everything looks so absolutely spotless that one might be miles in the country. Members can stay at the club for some days at a time, but three weeks is the limit. The club is very useful to country nurses, who come up to town for a day or two, or to those wishing to rest for a week, before going to a fresh case. Here are all the appurtenances of a good ladies' club, without the social bustle inseparable from many of them. The staff consist of an admirable cook, a parlourmaid and a page, and with this modest staff under her the talented lady who founded the club and who manages it works wonders. The charges are:—

	s.	d.
Bed for a night (including bath and boot-cleaning) . . . . .	2	0
Breakfast . . . . .	1	0
Lunch . . . . .	1	6
Tea . . . . .	0	6
Late Dinner . . . . .	2	6
or		
Supper . . . . .	1	6

The cook at this institution was for some time under a famous *chef* at one of the big



London clubs. There is an excellent library in connection with this club.

"The Nurse's Hostel," in Tottenham Court Road is a similar institution, but up to the present no arrangements have been made for living in the premises.

The fare provided for nurses is very plain indeed in all the large hospitals, and in many instances is neither well cooked nor well served, the lack of funds at most hospitals resulting in an inefficiency in the domestic service. Consequently, most nurses find it necessary to supplement the food in some slight degree with bovril, cocoa, biscuits, and other light food. Many night nurses are to be met taking a simple repast of this description at an A. B. C., or some similar establishment, in the course of a morning's walk between 9 and 10 A.M., before they go back to bed. If a nurse has only her salary to depend upon, these supplementary refreshments need

to be arranged with economy, or she will find herself at the end of her resources.

Matronships are always advertised in the local papers and generally in the medical journals. The duties of a matron vary very much with the size and importance of the hospital. The matron of a cottage hospital must be matron, sister, housekeeper, book-keeper, and very often nurse as well. The matron of a big hospital, on the other hand, has a position of very great responsibility, but her labours are more restricted. Her chief immediate occupation will be to supervise and direct the sisters; if any complaints are reported she has to interview the individual at fault herself. At the same time the matron is indirectly responsible for all that occurs within the precincts of the hospital. For a position of such responsibility and headship a combination of qualities is needful. Many excellent nurses fail as matrons and become dictatorial

and over-exacting. A good matron is cool-headed but kind-hearted, full of tact, strictly impartial, just. She must have the power of selecting her subordinates with discretion, and of directing them with judgment. She should be able to inspire a feeling of loyalty, and this she will never do as long as she looks upon them as mere machines. A kind and courteous but dignified manner is an excellent trait. Some matrons have the rare power of becoming personally known to and beloved by all their nurses, and when this is so, those working under them are indeed fortunate; but in other cases the matrons of big hospitals hold themselves so far aloof and dwell so apart that they cannot be described as being in touch with their nurses at all. This may be better than being too familiar with them, but there is an unfortunate side to such a distant demeanour, as no feeling of personal attachment is awakened.



MORE ABOUT PEGGY.

By Mrs. GEORGE DE HORNE VAIZEY.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE glance of shamed apprehension which Esther cast at Peggy as she appeared upon the threshold afforded immense delight to those who watched the meeting between the two girls. The old danger signals were all to the fore as Peggy walked across the room—the peaked brows, pursed-up lips, and air of gracious patronage; but the dignity of later years seemed but to have added fresh weapons to her armament. A pig-tail could never by any chance have been so imposing as the glossy coils which were now wound round the little head. The rustle of silken skirts heralded her approach in a manner infinitely more stately than the scamper of thin brown legs, and the wave of the little hand was emphasised by the twinkle of diamonds.

Esther grasped the back of her chair and gulped miserably. If only, only Edward had not been present, she could have faced the worst; but being still bashful and embarrassed in his presence, she trembled at the thought of what was to come, and supplicated dumbly with her eyes.

"My dear Esther, a thousand felicitations! I do indeed rejoice in your happiness," murmured Peggy sweetly, and pecked her cheek with a condescending kiss. Esther's face disappeared

for a moment, and came into view again with a fine access of colour and such an expression of anguish as seemed incomprehensible to those who did not know with what force Peggy's foot had been pressed on a pet corn, or had not heard the threatening whisper, "You would, would you? Wait till I get you alone!" which had belied the honeyed words. The two girls stood together in silence a moment longer, while the other occupants of the room gazed upon them with curious eyes; then Peggy held out her hand to the Professor in her most fascinating manner. "We should not need an introduction, Professor Reid, since we are already united by a mutual love and admiration. I congratulate you truly. To be approved by Esther has ever been the ambition of her friends. To be chosen above all others is indeed an honour."

"I feel it so! I feel it so!" agreed the Professor eagerly. He was charmed to discover so understanding an appreciation of his *fiancée*, and rose to the bait with innocent alacrity. "I feel very deeply the responsibility attached to such a trust and my own unworthiness to possess it, but I know that Esther will be patient with me and help me to overcome my failings. She is so wise, so gentle—"

"So sensible—"

"So sensible, as you observe; so kind, so patient—"

"So faithful to her resolutions, so strong, so *consistent* in her actions!"

"Consistent indeed!" echoed the Professor, and rubbed his hands with satisfaction. He saw only a remarkably affable, agreeable little lady, who expressed herself with great propriety, and could not understand why at this last word there was a general "family coach" movement in the room, everyone rushing hurriedly to take up a new position, or why Esther herself should hang her head with an expression of guilty embarrassment. How was he to know how often in that self-same company his Esther had sung the praises of a single life, and vowed that no mere men should be allowed to stand between herself and her life's work?

Mrs. Asplin took refuge at the tea-table, and rattled the cups with a trembling hand. The vicar tip-toed gently up and down in his carpet slippers, and, in his efforts to look solemn, dropped his chin until his face looked about half a yard long. Mellificent spluttered contentedly in a corner, and Rob rubbed his hands and whispered "Go it, Peg!" at every fresh opportunity.

The conversation during tea-time was conducted mainly between the Professor and Miss Saville, and that young