

PRIZE ESSAY COMPETITION.—VII.

"DESCRIBE A COMPLETE CURRICULUM OF TRAINING FOR NURSES IN A HOSPITAL CONTAINING UPWARDS OF 200 BEDS."

By ANNIE BLISSETT.

A PROPERLY organised Hospital, containing two hundred beds, gives every facility for the efficient Medical and Surgical training of a Nurse. It is not the rule to set apart a Ward for Children, though the plan is adopted in some of the large Hospitals, and, from the similarity of their habits and diseases, is likely to render them most efficiently and effectually nursed. Where there is no special Ward, they are found, of every age and size, scattered among the adults; and though they cannot have a Nurse completely devoted to themselves, yet she has opportunity of learning the peculiar idiosyncrasies of childhood, and is glad of the change from a trying adult case. The children are more important little beings than when nursed *en masse*; they serve also to brighten the Ward, and their prattle diverts the minds of collateral sufferers from their own pain, and gives a homeliness to the whole Ward, where they sometimes run a risk of being spoiled.

A Nurse should not commence her training before the age of twenty-two or three years. There are many objections to younger women being admitted to a general Hospital. The male patients are likely to feel less sensitive than in the hands of a young girl; and it is necessary for the discipline of the Ward that every Nurse be able to command respect. A successful Nurse needs to be dignified without being dull, having the ability of controlling her patients without crushing them, before which she must have learned to control herself. "The moment we grow angry we cease striving for truth, and begin striving for ourselves," and there is nothing more incongruous than a Nurse in a passion.

We cannot—nor would we desire to—find old heads on young shoulders. The careless youth-tide passes all too swiftly; but we know that calm consecutive thought, clear judgment, and steadfast will, only exceptionally belong to the young, when Nursing is more in danger of being undertaken as a freak of fancy, or from sentimental motives—sentimental, as distinctly apart from sentiment, which widens, warms, and sweetens the nature of a woman; which teaches her to appreciate the lines of a sunset, and treasure the flowers that come in her way; but which never renders her maudlin or melancholy. Nor do I depreciate Hospital work as a refuge from disappointment and a result of sorrow. The active contemplation of the sorrows of others, and the effort to relieve their

sufferings, is the surest panacea for our own grief, as "the labour we delight in, physics pain," for it is a refuge from self and selfishness. 'Tis difficult to be melancholy when there is plenty of work to be done, but if a woman find the labour no delight—only a weary round of uncongenial toil—by all means let her give it up at once: it is unfair to the Hospital, unfair to the patients, and unfair to herself, to continue, for there are many who have the gift of ministration, to whom the work is a real pleasure; though I thoroughly agree with a well-known writer in these pages, who says, "Not only is no woman too good to be a Nurse, but that few women are good enough." What, then, must the Ward be when the object of the Nurses is merely the small remuneration, and where the patients are a trying necessity? Women wanted in the Hospital are—as I heard lately of workers needed in the mission-field—women who cannot well be spared, whose absence means a loss to someone.

But the Hospital should not be entered without due consideration of all that a Nurse's life means, and all that a Nurse's life renounces. It means real hard work, and often weariness; it means going unhesitatingly into the midst of infectious disease, doing the work faithfully and well, leaving the chances of one's life, with the lives of the patients, in the Hand of God. A Nurse's life will leave little room for other interests. The old business of pleasure must be entirely given up, but the pleasure that can be taken will be appreciated as it never was in the days of satiety; acquaintances will slip away from the new life in the impossibility of a large correspondence and the separation of interests, but the compensation of a life that is undoubtedly well spent, that is of certain benefit, that is full of human interest, and maybe bright with human love, is far beyond the pleasure of luxury and the charm of Society's wand.

The candidate will commence her training as Probationer in a Ward where a vacancy occurs—probably a female Medical, for a Medical Ward is quieter, and not so confusing to a novice as the rush of a Surgical one. She will learn the rudiments and details of Nursing, the methods, by the best of all means—practical application—of keeping the Ward, and every corner of the Ward, spotlessly clean and neat, by means of duster, broom, and brush; to make and change beds with a minimum risk of chill and exposure, and without removing the patient; to wash them, change the linen, and perform all the small offices which they are unable to attend to themselves; to prepare poultices of linseed, charcoal and mustard, simple bread poultices, and those of bran, fomentations, and cold water dressings—which are liable to be-

previous page

next page