

PRIZE ESSAY COMPETITION.—VII.

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

BY MRS. KATHARINE E. GAY.

“Mayest thou achieve!”—E. ARNOLD.

HOW vividly one can recall the first night in Hospital, everything so strange and unlike home! First comes the interview with Matron, who has a few appropriate and encouraging remarks to make; after which you are shown to your tiny cubicle—how absurdly small it looks!—one of five or six, in a room scarcely bigger than the very comfortable one you have just given up “at home.” Henceforth—at least, for some time to come—this is to be your home; and you cannot help looking with sinking heart at that very bare wall of vivid patternless paint, and the plain varnished wood panelling that divides your little domain from your next-door neighbour. How uncomfortable, too, the bed! which, alas! does not improve on acquaintance (for has it not the hardness of poverty, and coldness of charity?), and the bare necessities of life, represented by a dwarf chest of drawers, washstand, and one chair!

But cheer up, faint heart! Remember how you have combated objections innumerable from affectionate relatives and friends, and have at last fairly launched out in the vocation in life you have so long and earnestly wished for.

What a change an hour's work has done! A dainty cover hides the useful but ugly receptacle for clothes, and on it are scattered many souvenirs of home. Those few water-colour sketches and photographs have transformed that forbidding wall, and the plain hanging looking-glass, draped with a soft “Liberty” scarf and many-coloured fans, is henceforth a thing of beauty. Then there is the little bookcase, with closely packed shelves of well-loved volumes; a cosy eiderdown for the bed, and an ample curtain of pretty cretonne to hang over the pegs, which take the place of wardrobe. What a memorable sensation it is, donning uniform for the first time! It looks and feels so strange, but soon you learn to appreciate how comfortable it is.

The new life commences in good earnest next morning, when that unwelcome call comes at six o'clock. Breakfast is at 6.40, so there is no time to be lost, and to be late would be a sorry beginning, where so much depends on punctuality. Work in the Ward begins at seven o'clock. Nurse—who can well remember her own “first morning”—shows her new Probationer what is

generally known as the “kitchen,” over which the Ward-maid presides (if there is one)—where all mugs, plates, &c., are washed and kept—where poultices are made, and some of the food prepared; the lavatory, bath-room, cupboards, and drawers, where things she may require, or be sent for, are kept. All this she must carefully note, and not require to be told more than once.

The patients will have finished breakfast, so Nurse, with her new pupil's assistance, begins by making the beds; the former meanwhile showing her many little details, which make so much difference in the patients' comfort, and how to assist those who can get out of bed with help, and how to move more helpless ones. Only those who have experienced illness themselves, know what an immense difference it makes to their comfort having the bed made *well*. No creases left under the poor tender body, but the under sheet well stretched and firmly tucked in, the pillows thoroughly well shaken, and the upper coverings so arranged that they do not slip off, or let draughts in, and yet not so tightly tucked up that movement is almost impossible, and the feet are miserably pressed down. When these are finished, and the quilts well turned up out of the way, tea-leaves must be lightly scattered over the boards, and the Ward carefully and quietly swept, each article of furniture being moved out and swept behind, and no dusty corners left. Next should come the pail of warm soapy water, brush, flannel, and rubber. The top of each locker, stool and dinner-board will require washing clean and drying; after this there will be polishing of brass door-handles and inkstand, and dusting of all furniture. Hard and dirty work, no doubt our new Pro. thinks—not at all her idea of Nursing; but till she has thoroughly mastered every detail of Ward work, she cannot expect to be allowed to undertake much of the more interesting and responsible duties. She must regard these sometimes irksome labours as stepping-stones to better things, and make herself mistress of them as soon as possible, remembering that—

“All things come round to him who will but wait.”

After the patients' lunch at nine, the Ward gets a final tidying, quilts turned down, flowers picked over and put in fresh water, and plants brought from the bath-room. A well-earned rest of a few minutes comes, with a cup of hot coffee or cocoa, and a slice of bread and butter, putting new life into our tired Pro., who begins to realize now, if she never did before in her life, what really hard work is. The House Surgeon and his Assistants may be expected to visit the Ward any time between ten and twelve, so the clean apron, cap, and cuffs are put on, and back Nurse hurries, to set out her dressings—supposing it to be a Surgical

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