

easily read or write," but it should not be required of educated young women to-day.

American nurses have been saddened by the death of Miss Isabel McIsaac, Superintendent of the Army Nurse Corps. Miss McIsaac had been President of both the National Associations of Superintendents and Nurses in the United States, and is described in the American Journal of Nursing as the best known and best loved nurse in America. She was for a number of years Superintendent of the Illinois Training School for Nurses, and was the author of several nursing text-books which are widely used in the United States. Miss McIsaac will be very greatly missed, and we extend our sympathy to her many friends and associates in America.

SHOULD NURSES DUST?

BY MRS. COOPER.

I REMEMBER a motto which hung on the wall of one of our corridors at school, "A little thing is a little thing, but faithfulness in little things is a very great thing." I have never forgotten that motto and to my mind is it the keynote of our profession. It is pleasant to be able to launch out into the world as a fully trained nurse, but is it so pleasant to go through the years which entail that faithfulness in little things; and especially the first year? I have heard a great deal of discussion on the matter of which I wish to speak, that is, should nurses be trained in domestic work as well as nursing? To my mind the two things are so connected that to be a trained nurse with no conception of dusting and so on is not possible.

The people who oppose the usual home training seem to have three chief arguments, at least I have not heard any others. Firstly, they say that dusting and brass cleaning are not necessary for the making of a nurse and can be left to ward maids, or other persons whose path in life lies in the direction of brushes and Globe polish. A nurse should be free to devote her whole mind to mastering the details of her profession unhampered by sordid drudgery. Again, I have heard people say that as long as nurses are expected to perform menial tasks the right kind of woman will stand aloof. Experience, I think, proves this to be a fallacy. The third and last argument is on the ground of health, it is said that so much work in addition to the usual nursing duties is not fair to the nurse and tires her out before she has had time to grasp any of the nursing curriculum. Less menial work and more off duty seems to be the chief desire of the present day probationers. I may sound very narrow-minded to be able to produce only three arguments for what I might call the anti-domestic party and will only answer those three from my point of view. I own up to being prejudiced in favour of domestic training by the ideas which I imbibed in my own training school.

To discuss the first argument, that nurses have no use for dusting and cleaning in present or after nursing life. How is a nurse to know that ward work, or cleaning in a private house is done properly unless she has done it all herself ? Would she know whether a dressing was done aseptically, or a bandage correctly adjusted unless she had been shown in the first place how they were done ? Again in India for example, how many private nurses allow a servant to dust a sick room, I wonder. What can be more irritating to a sick person than the ceaseless "flap, flap" of the eternal *jharan* ? Nothing I think, unless it be to lie in bed and watch a nurse attempt to dust who has no idea where or how to begin. We are taught surgical asepsis and the personal care of the sick, and yet how important it is that the furniture and utensils of a sick room, or ward should be beyond reproach. Surely it is the A. B. C. of asepsis to know how to remove dust and to keep all the fittings of a sick room in accord with the theory of surgical asepsis. The method of dusting which stirs up all the dust and leaves accumulations of dust and dirt in remote corners is a very different one from the method in which we are taught to dust in our probationer days. I have been into the bath-room of a house out here where there was illness and a nurse, and I was horrified at the state of the bath, basins and toilet accessories. No nurse who had ever had to clean lavatories and bath-rooms for the inspection of a vigilant Sister could bear such a state of things. She would far sooner forbid the servants to touch the bath-room, and make it her own special care. You may show a sweeper how things should be done, you may give the *bhishti* and bearer daily demonstrations, but remove your eye for one day and the result will only make you more than ever decided as to who is to take charge of the bath-room.

If you have never been taught the correct way to wash cups and saucers and ordinary articles used for meals, you are not likely to detect the grease left between the prongs of a fork or the greasy feel underneath the plate. Little things like that can quite easily make an invalid refuse food or not enjoy it. When one is ill it is the little things which worry and irritate. The nurse who can dust quickly and thoroughly and put her hand to any domestic work connected with the sick room is a more valuable person than the one who doesn't even know whether a room is swept, or dusted first. I also think that if a woman who has never really used her hands becomes a probationer the very fact of having to polish and clean, teaches her how to use her hands, so that when she comes to handle thermometers and instruments she is less apt to be destructive.

Now as to the theory that this work keeps gentlewomen out of the nursing profession. A woman who is a gentlewoman will not complain that dusting, or cleaning lowers her dignity ; on the other hand she is only too keen to learn all that can be learnt, without any ideas as to her superiority to perform any such work.

To become proficient in any profession one must master many detail only indirectly connected with it, and surely it is false pride to think

that any work which helps to do this is menial or degrading. The type of woman who holds these views is certainly unfit to become a nurse.

Now as to the argument that health is injured by excessive domestic work. Nowadays I do not think nurses are asked to scrub floors or clean grates. Certainly we had to sweep our wards twice a day, but I have been told that it is said to be most excellent for the figure! I do not think that dusting or brass cleaning can be as tiring as standing for a whole afternoon in the operating theatre; yet no one complains of that. The nursing profession is only suitable for women who are sound mentally and physically; and I think the first year's work is an excellent test. I do not deny that our training is hard, but is nursing an easy profession? I think not, and the first year's work and the small responsibilities attached to it are excellent preludes to the greater responsibilities which follow later. As Charles Kingsley says, "It is only they who do their duties in every day trivial matters who will fulfil them on great occasions."

Nurses often find themselves in strange situations and the woman who can cheerfully and easily turn her hand to anything is always appreciated.

When I see the *ayas* and *mihtranis* about the Indian hospitals and think of our one ward-maid at home I am always amused. And that one ward-maid was usually a despot, but a most excellent corrective to any probationer who did not feel drawn towards washing up feeders or cleaning saucepans used for cooking Benger's food.

I am afraid I have harped rather on the subject I have taken up, but I do feel very strongly on the matter, and I think that the routine training which includes dusting, sweeping and washing up induces a higher standard of cleanliness in everything than the training which provides servants to perform all these tasks.

I am sure many of you will think I am intensely narrow and bigoted, but I write from experience—that has proved to me over and over again the value I gained from my domestic work; and more especially since I have done private nursing in India.

REMINISCENCES.

AT present all our thoughts are full of the Germans and War. Ten years ago I wished to go to Japan and wrote to secure a berth on a Nippon Yusen Kaisha boat from Colombo to Kobe. The answer was, "No boats, Japanese are hurrying home for the war with Russia." I secured a berth on a big German liner on which were sixty German Naval Officers going to join their Men-of-War in Kiaochau Bay. One of these officers was the third son of the Kaiser, a youth of nineteen years and having a marked likeness to his father. The day after leaving Colombo I found my chair on deck was placed next that of the Prince, he on that morning was much elated about his purchases of jewelry in Ceylon and showed them round. On arriving at Singapore he declared his intention to visit the Sultan of Johore as he said