

**On the Formation of Character by William Bevan-Lewis MSc LRCP MRCS  
Medical Superintendent and Director of the West Riding Asylum, Wakefield  
and Lecturer and Examiner in Mental diseases to the University of Leeds**

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ON THE  
FORMATION OF CHARACTER:

AN ADDRESS TO THE NURSING STAFF AT THE RETREAT,  
YORK, DELIVERED NOVEMBER 1ST, 1906.

BY

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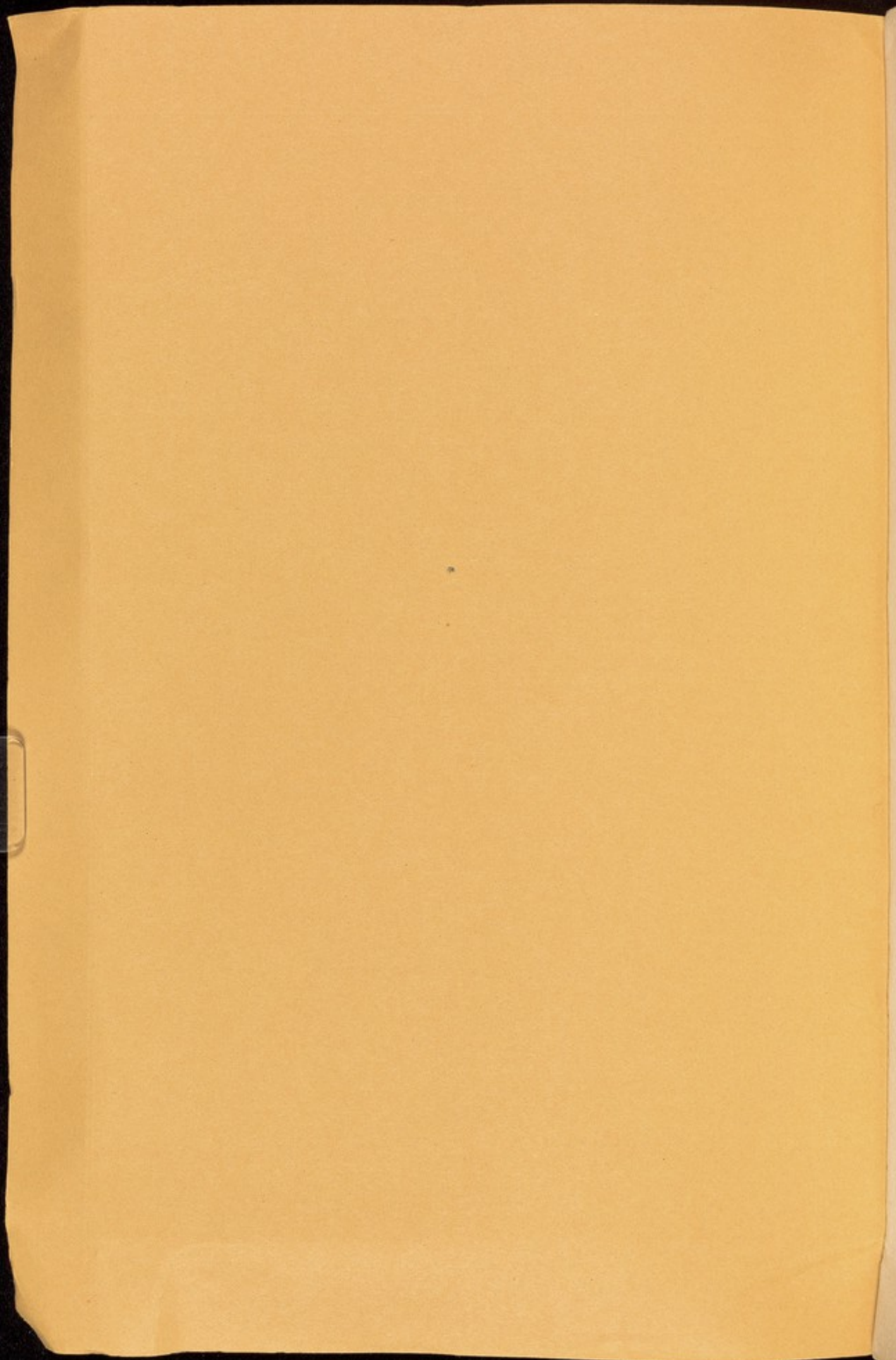
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ON THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER: AN  
ADDRESS TO THE NURSING STAFF AT THE  
RETREAT, YORK, DELIVERED NOVEMBER 1ST, 1906.

BY WILLIAM BEVAN-LEWIS, M.Sc.(UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS),  
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WHEN a few months since I was asked by Dr. Bedford Pierce to address the nursing staff of this time-honoured institution it was a moot point in my mind whether I should take as my thesis some general subject connected with the history and profession of nursing or direct my remarks to you in a more personal appeal than so general a theme would permit.

I might have taken as my text:

(a) The present position of the nursing profession in the hospitals and asylums of Great Britain.

(b) The history of the several organisations of nursing, and the work accomplished by them.

(c) The aims and special features of mental nursing in particular.

(d) Or, lastly, the proposed legislation which has been set on foot for securing for this profession certain desirable ends.

I decided to ignore all these subjects and endeavour to get nearer to each and all of you by a very personal consideration; and if at times I appear *too personal* I at least have the plea to present that I have for this profession so profound a respect, I may say affection, that after thirty years' work amongst some two hundred nurses and attendants at Wakefield Asylum I am convinced that no question can appeal more to you all than the one I have chosen for this occasion.

The formation of the nurse's character is my theme, her

moral as distinguished from her intellectual development. Character above all things is essential to her success in life, to her real and lasting happiness, and is the one thing needful upon which she may rejoice in the absence of wealth, fame, talent, and social position in the usual acceptation of those terms.

The word "character" comes from a Greek root signifying to cut down into, to engrave deeply, and denotes, therefore, the permanent elements which have been engraven into a man's soul by the stress of circumstances and experiences.

"Character," says one, "is nature in the highest form. It is of no use to ape it or to contend with it. Somewhat is possible of resistance, and of persistence, and of creation, to this power, which will foil all emulation. Men of character are the conscience of the society to which they belong." Now, these are strong terms to use, and the attainment of character is a very lofty ambition; but for all that, remember it is open to all alike, whether gifted or not from an intellectual point of view, to aspire to and acquire this richest of all prizes that life can bestow—the sanctity of character.

I must, however, first congratulate you on the good taste exhibited by all in the choice you have made of a professional career. There is, indeed, no profession so noble in its aspirations, so unselfish in its aims, so truly social in its pursuits, and so replete with opportunities for making life beautiful as that of nursing. Each sphere of life, of course, has its heroes—men and women large of soul. Sailors, soldiers, legislators, historians, poets, philosophers, scientific worthies, and divines afford us examples of illustrious lives and noble thought; but I doubt much if any profession can present us with so many genuine heroes whose lives, although not emblazoned upon the world's records, are more deeply engraven upon the hearts and memories of humanity, more silently yet more sacredly cherished, than the heroes of the nursing profession. Nor is the reason for this far to seek, for of all occupations it pre-eminently is distinguished by the most human of all traits, self-sacrifice. The nurse of all others can enter the holy of holies of the human soul, and in the most sacred of moments communicate that comfort which poor humanity then so truly depends upon.

Often when I see before me a body of men and women devoted to this great vocation of nursing, as I do on the present

occasion, I ask myself the questions: "Do they in any way adequately realise the lofty nature of their vocation? Do their hearts thrill at times at the conception of the mission to which they have been called? Do they recall the wondrous examples which have preceded them in this career and the mighty power which can be wielded by them for the good of their fellow-creatures? And if they do, do they regard it as a sacred trust confided to them, to be treasured with due humility, and not to arouse in their breasts over-weening self-confidence?"

Specially applicable are these remarks to you nurses of the York Retreat, trained as you are at an institution which was the first in Great Britain to grapple with the inhuman methods of treating the insane once so prevalent, trained at an institution the fame of which has been rendered immortal by the illustrious work of William Tuke and his noble band of coadjutors and successors, and who have now to sustain by your energy, devotion, and loyalty the reputation of an institution which dates back to 1796.

You are all aware that of late years the education of the nurse has undergone a wondrous transformation, and that a far greater *intellectual element* has entered into her training and pursuits. Formerly there were few demands made upon the nurse's intellectual efforts; gentleness, patience, forbearance, a ready eye for observation, a ready hand and will to help and relieve, were the chief requirements of our nurse. Her knowledge of the human frame and its economy, her acquaintance with diseased processes, and the *rationale* of our methods of controlling these, were of an infinitely crude description. Now she is trained in elementary anatomy and physiology, is supposed to have a fairly clear notion of healthy organic processes, and to recognise the early signs of departure from the normal state; she is required to gauge the temperature by the thermometer, to record pulse and respiration, to attend to all that concerns the hygiene of the patient and his surroundings, the care and distribution of dietary and medicines, to aid the physician or surgeon in multiform ways, and to be ready and expert on occasions of sudden emergency which are sure to arise.

Now, with the advent of a more intellectual element into her life by this scholastic training, the nurse is exposed to a new danger which may seriously interfere with her usefulness. The

old adage "A little learning is a dangerous thing" is as true now as it ever was, and is most appropriate to the nurse at this period of her career. She is apt to attach too much importance to acquirements which must be of a very elementary nature, and she therefore tends to appraise her attainments at too high a value. Thus it is that you meet with examples in hospital and asylum life where the nurse, instead of being the modest handmaid of science, becomes obtrusive in her desire to exhibit her knowledge, worries and distracts the physician by her constant attempt to note facts which, although quite relevant to the case, will probably be taken in at a glance of the eye of an experienced practitioner. This tendency to fussy prattling at once stamps its possessor and places her at a great disadvantage when contrasted with the calm, self-controlled, silent behaviour of the accomplished nurse, who is ever ready to afford information when questioned by the doctor. The great William Penn used to say "Have a care, therefore, where there is more sail than ballast." The typical nurse knows full well that knowledge of this kind is not to be valued *for its own sake*, or for the glorification of its possessor, but rather for its *application to the wants* of suffering humanity, and thus without a word amiss she goes silently about her work, ever watchful, ever observant, ever ready when asked why this or the other thing is done to give a rational explanation, and winning thus the confidence of both patient and physician.

Modesty, therefore, you will agree with me, in respect to her intellectual attainments, is always to be aimed at by one who would take a high position in the nursing profession. Obtrude not these prized gifts for idle show, to satisfy the pride of the moment, but be ever ready to apply these powers at the appropriate moment to the great advantage of those under your care. Above all things, cultivate a quiet demeanour and treasure in your hearts the dictum of the truly wise: "Speech is silvern, silence is golden."

The class of nurse required for our large hospitals and asylums should, above all things, embrace the characteristic of a high standard of *moral excellency*. Now, the types of moral excellency, as you are all aware, vary with the age, the country, the occupation, and the sex. The stern stoic virtues of the old Roman, with his disdain for suffering, indifference to death,

small value attached to the life of others as well as his own, was a type essential to a great military power destined for the conquest of the world; whereas the humanising effects of art, literature, poesy, are revealed in the amiable virtues of the Greek, whilst the self-sacrificing virtues of Christianity spread further over the pagan nations of Europe as a happy union of the heroic and tender virtues, the highest type of manhood.

There is one picture in these olden times which always seems to remind me of the birth of the true nursing instinct of the present times; it is a charming picture to dwell upon. At a time when Athens was a centre from which art, science, and literature shone with a steady lustre over the whole civilised world, and gave encouragement to the teaching of all religions in her midst, there was to be found one altar in particular, not inscribed to any god, not distinguished by any ceremonial rites, yet thronged by worshippers and revered before all other shrines, an altar to Pity, "the first great assertion," as Lecky informs us, "to mankind of the supreme authority of mercy." With this worship there was naturally spread a deepening sense of the sanctity of human life, the pathos of human suffering, the yearning for its relief, which form, I conceive, the very foundation of the nursing instinct. I have always been fascinated by this great feature of pagan times. Classic lore presents us with no more pathetic feature to dwell upon than this human instinct striving to assert itself against the cruelty, rapacity, and indifference to life of the age. We expect from the nurse in particular the highest development of this sense, a keen sense of the sanctity of human life and a capacity for pity and sympathy with human suffering.

The word "pity" comes from the root *pietas*—pious, *i.e.*, reverence and love for the Deity, indicating how lofty is the sentiment. But sympathy is still more than pity, and indicates a feeling in common, a co-operation, so that whilst pity may be a *passive* emotion sympathy is by its very nature *active* for the good of the sufferer. For both of these the faculty of imagination must be keen; the nurse who is devoid of sympathy must learn the unpleasant truth that she is devoid of imagination, that her mental faculties are to this extent blunted and dwarfed.

Young children, as most of you know, show early defect of imaginative vigour by their senseless, purposeless, cruelty



towards small animals, or even towards their own kind ; they fail, in fact, to place themselves in the position of the sufferer so as to realise what is endured. When, however, we arrive at man's estate a defect of imagination leading to acts of cruelty, or to defective pity, should warn us that our mental organisation is at fault, and this should be regarded with shamefacedness and sorrow as a defect in one of the loftiest attributes of humanity.

Yet remember, pity is not sufficient. If you properly fill your sphere it must be translated into action. As that great German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte said in 1799, "Not for idle contemplation of thyself, not for brooding over devout sensations ; no, for action art thou here ; thine action, and thine action alone, determines thy worth." And again, he reiterates, "Not merely *to know*, but, according to thy knowledge, *to do* is thy vocation." A nurse devoid of such sympathy should strive to rouse her imagination by placing herself in the position of the sufferer or by mentally placing her mother, father, sister, or anyone most dear to her in similar trouble.

We should all strive to maintain this noblest of our faculties the gentleness begot of pity, and emulate that noble nature which Shakespeare makes Mark Antony attribute to the fallen Brutus :

"His life was gentle ; and the elements  
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up,  
And say to all the world, 'This was a man.'"

Such gentleness, such pity, is indeed akin to love—I mean to that Divine love for our fellow-men of which an eloquent writer says :

"Not to love is not to live, or it is to live a living death. The life that goes out in love to all is the life that is full and rich and continually expanding in beauty and in power."

#### *Discipline or Subordination.*

All of you know what military discipline means at a time of war, how absolute must be the control, the decision, of the leader ; how implicitly his orders must be carried out by his officers ; how united and harmonious must be the co-operation

of the several units or bodies of men who constitute the army. You well know that if any one unit or regiment acts upon its own initiative in defiance of orders *because it did not understand such orders* or their import, infinite confusion would result, and, similarly, what chaos would ensue if his men refused to obey a certain manœuvre because they questioned the motive or the discretion of the officer.

Now, in a well-organised nursing staff the same unquestioning obedience must be demanded, an obedience which pertains just as much to the several subordinate officers acting under their chief as to the several individual units of a ward, the nurses and attendants. Your regulations are framed as much for your own development as for the welfare of the institution and its inmates, and, therefore, their dictation must be regarded as final and absolute.

It is not, however, the printed regulations which are so much the subject of question amongst the junior nurses as that unwritten law involving *minor matters* connected with the individual moral conduct, the manner and spirit in which such regulations are carried out, the general tone of discourse, the *esprit de corps*, and the prompt attention to what may seem, perhaps, the trivial duties of the day.

Now, discipline or subordination begins at home, is carried further at school, and prepares us for the real work of life, and those who have been blessed with a good home and wise parents enter the field of nursing far better equipped for subordinating themselves to their superiors and for understanding what discipline means.

If, however, undisciplined minds enter upon this course of training the usual result is that the orders of the superior are subjected to criticism because the motive dictating the order is not understood; the sister or charge-nurse is regarded as overbearing when she insists on the letter of the law being carried out; the matter is referred to the chief officer or matron, from whom, of course, no redress can be expected, and the junior, in a discontented spirit, probably throws up her post.

Now let us see wherein the error consists. In the first place, it is not the function of a junior ever to criticise orders given by a superior. In the next place, her position and experience would render her judgment quite inadequate to express an opinion upon such matters in general. It is pre-

sumed that all grades of officers in a well-organised institution hold their posts by virtue of merit ; in other words, the superior officer is usually of higher intellectual and moral development than her subordinate, and although there may be exceptions to this rule, the subordinate is bound to assume that the judgment of the superior is dictated by a fuller acquaintance with her profession and a keener insight than is the case with the junior ; in fact, the higher plane of office to which she has attained is presumptive of a more highly developed mind in that particular sphere, and that she has passed through the developmental stages of her subordinate staff.

Let me ask you, therefore, to remember, when any point of discipline arises which mystifies or worries you, that the old teaching, old as the hills, is, "*the higher mind looks down into and understands the lower, but the lower cannot comprehend the higher.*" It has ever been so. The lower intelligence fails to grasp the meaning and motives of the higher, begins to carp and cavil, to question authority, to nurse bitterness, or resentfully ends in direct insubordination ; whilst the higher intelligence looks down with concern and pity on the lower with a perfect comprehension of its difficulties, of the questionings to which it was also itself a subject, and puts down its arms to aid the lower to rise to a higher plane of being.

If you but conceive the constitution of a nursing staff from this point of view, it would end in your respect and devotion to your superiors, in a consciousness of progressive development, and in a refreshing sense of the dignity and charm of a well-disciplined mind, and surely this is worth the getting. Burke, speaking of such disciplined minds, says, " Full of dignity themselves, they respect dignity in all, but they feel it sacred to the unhappy."

Now do not for a moment suppose this to be an easy task ; nothing worth the getting is easy of attainment. Chalmers tells us that " the acts of virtue ripen into habits, and the goodly and permanent result is the formation or establishment of a virtuous character." We know full well that this is a psychological fact. " Every new achievement of principle smooths the way to future achievements of the same kind," renders the struggle less difficult, and virtuous acts become the very habit of our life.

What is it that I have asked you to do ?

(a) First, to look into yourself, recognise your own inefficiency, admit your own restricted stage of development—in other words, acquire self-knowledge.

(b) To subordinate your natural inclinations and will to a higher law which you may not understand at the time, but to which you submit *because it is higher*—in other words, self-abnegation, self-sacrifice, a sinking of your own personality in what you feel to be higher than self.

(c) To strive patiently after the higher, an uplifting of your arms to a higher plane of being to which you aspire.

*Self-knowledge.*—A few words upon the virtue of self-knowledge. The Grecian philosophy held as sacred above all truths that dictum which they would have had inscribed upon every temple and deeply engraved upon each heart: "Know thyself." If we all bore this ancient maxim in mind, it would have a most refining influence upon both our natures and actions. To know yourself is to probe deeply into the origin of your motives to action, which is a very difficult task to undertake, yet the truly wise will strive to do so. Now, although you may not be able to pry into and to understand the motives of a higher mind than your own, yet your own motives will, when honestly inquired into, in most cases be revealed.

But there is a very ready way to knowing oneself, and this also philosophy has dictated for us. It has been the treasured guide of some of the greatest intellects who have given their thought seriously to their own moral development, and I, therefore, warmly commend it to your notice.

It is this: Carefully note the judgments you pass upon your fellow-man. Ask yourself what the voice of scandal or slander sometimes prompts you to repeat and even believe; then say bravely to yourself, "These are my own shortcomings, either actually or potentially." Rest assured that the teachings of philosophy have fully vindicated the truth that what one is ready to suspect his fellow of is just the very fault he himself is likely to be guilty of; his suspicion is but a *reflection of his own mind*. Do remember this, that the world is what we make it for ourselves; and just as the artist sees the landscape or other form of beauty with a very different eye from the uncultured eye of the peasant, so the world and your fellow-creatures are coloured by the reflection of the several minds which conceive them.

I am not afraid of wearying you with the enunciation of this great truth ; perhaps I may hope that as students of mental operations this truth will have already been fixed in your minds ; but if not, tell me why yon melancholiac is assured that life is a horror, that all is hopeless and sad, that the former days of happiness have passed for ever away for all.

"Disease," you reply. Yes, but in like manner all healthy states vary in the tone and colouring that they give to the environment, and vastly different are the views of life we severally enjoy. You think, may be, that your companion beside you sees the landscape with the same eye as yourself, that it creates the same feelings and sentiments. You were never more mistaken in your life ; no two of us ever see things or judge people exactly alike.

Therefore, remember the world is what you make it, or, in other words, is a reflection of your own minds. Self-knowledge is acquired by noting your judgments on your fellow-men, your views of life, your motives and principles of action. If your judgments are harsh, if you see chiefly the unlovely in your fellow-man, be assured the unloveliness is in yourself also. Seek to eradicate the evil lurking there, examine the known weaknesses to which you are yourself subject, and ten to one but it is the very lapse you are fond of attributing to those you come in contact with.

Follow this principle out bravely, and honestly attempt to suppress your faults as thus revealed, and reward will certainly come by a view of life and your fellow-creatures greatly to be desired. Suspicion will fade away, better motives will be credited to those around you, and your purer mind will reflect its own nature on all things and make life really beautiful. The acceptance of this principle of self-reflection, by which we acquire that most desirable of all acquisitions, self-knowledge, is the secret of those eminent lives which have shed such lustre upon the history of ancient and modern times. Above all things will self-knowledge aid you in eradicating from your nature those cancerous pests of institution life, gossip, scandal, suspicion, ill-will, wrong-doing, and envy. Surely this is also worthy of attainment !

The second effort I asked you to make was to subordinate yourself to the higher law *because* you know it to be higher. And here we come to the virtue of self-knowledge. There are

proud natures which cannot readily become subservient to other minds, too proud to submit to rules and regulations which they regard as irksome and the import of which they fail to grasp. Now, self-knowledge leads to true humility, and soon begets that reverence for the higher law, that respect for authority as well as that striving after higher things, which renders them above all things dutiful and loyal. Sinking oneself in the higher law, placing oneself loyally at its disposal, is the surest road to advancement and moral excellence.

Self-constraint, the acquiescence in what you know to be right, however unpleasant to you, is demanded of the asylum nurse to a very notable degree. It is here, I think, that the nursing of our asylums shows a lustre which no hospital, so-called, can ever hope to attain to; no comparison, I think, can possibly be drawn between the tests to patience, endurance, and loyalty to which our mental nurses are subjected and those imposed upon her hospital sister. As Emerson truly says, "to measure character we use the resistance of circumstance," and surely no one who has watched for a day the life of a good nurse in our refractory wards would otherwise than maintain that the worries, anxieties, and at times the real tragedies of her life are resistances which tend to bring out the noblest characters in their true light.

This is why I think that a long training is desirable for the formation of a really good nurse, and why I believe that your Superintendent has acted so wisely in requiring of you a four years' course of training—none too long a period for the serious work before you. Such a system can only issue in the weeding out of those undesirable ones who are not prepared to make nursing the one serious business of their life, and upon whom, therefore, nursing lectures, ambulance work, and clinical teaching is so much wasted energy; and in the next place, it must result in a sound and systematic training which should find you at its termination accomplished nurses, gifted with powers which make you the most valued assets of an institution and of a community. Let me ask you to recall the words of Dr. Bedford Pierce in his last Annual Report of this institution, and which I most cordially endorse: "It is also important to remember that the training of a mental nurse is very different from that in a general hospital, and no nurse can be considered qualified for the difficult duty of nursing the

insane without special training ; nor, on the other hand, should a nurse with only asylum training be considered a trained hospital nurse." I would only add to this statement my opinion, that the mental nurse requires a far longer period for her course than a hospital nurse, and this because of the large demands made upon her moral culture.

But it is not alone as regards the serious trials I have alluded to that you will require to exercise self-constraint, but in your relationships to your nursing colleagues, your superior officers, and the interests of the institution which, above all others, demands your loyalty.

The patience begot of self-constraint is evidenced by the *invariable gentleness* you have to observe towards your patients, however wearisome they may be, and also by the spirit of *cheerfulness* which you must strive to cultivate amongst all circumstances whilst going about your work. Such cheerfulness is highly infectious, and reflects its influence far and wide upon patient and staff alike. Little do you know, perhaps, you who pursue your work with quiet watchfulness, gentleness, and a constant cheerfulness, how many silent and unsuspected blessings you gain from those around you. There are times, of course, when from fatigue or from physical causes cheerfulness may be hard to assume. On such occasions, if still you succeed in bringing a ray of light into your midst, you may feel assured your growth in self-constraint is progressing.

Were you to ask me what class of nurse shows the most vicious lack of self-constraint I should not reply, as some of you might expect, the hasty or passionate ; for the sudden outburst, over, is followed often by a degree of real shame and grief ; but I would name above all others the nurse fond of gossip and scandal.

Be assured if you fail in this respect, if you lightly handle the characters of those around you, if you pass harsh judgments unnecessarily, or take pleasure in dwelling upon or exposing the frailties of others, you are sadly wanting in this great virtue of a true nurse—self-control. Such a nurse is always open to suspicion, for if she be a gossip about her colleagues and their doings, how can she be entrusted with the numerous private matters which a large institution brings before her notice ? To prattle to the outside world about her patients and their private histories and doings is as culpable as

for a physician to talk too freely about the patients entrusted to his care. Let your self-control, therefore, exclude the possibility of gossip. Learn to respect the necessity for privacy, and gain thereby that self-respect which issues from a consciousness of loyalty.

*Vigilance.*—Just as much as there is a temptation to gossip amongst yourselves, to your own injury and that of others, so there is ever a temptation to a lack of vigilance, evidenced by a dreaming, brooding tendency. This is often seen in undisciplined minds, and the peril of this tendency rests on the fact that few regard it as a fault at all. It has always been their nature to indulge in reverie, to allow the mind to wander aimlessly. Now, this tendency is obviously opposed to the one great merit of a good nurse, the quality of vigilance. Watchfulness is eminently demanded of the *asylum* nurse, and if she permits her dreamy tendency, her castle-building, or her reveries to obtrude themselves when upon duty she will utterly lose this most desirable quality of vigilance, and disasters are sure to ensue.

There is a secret power in genuine love for suffering humanity which necessarily excludes the faults I have delineated; such love should, of course, be quite natural—how rarely this is the case I fear we all see too often. Still, those who try to acquire it in spite of natural tendencies are striving after a higher ideal; nor should they cease their efforts until life and love are one, or, as is so beautifully rendered by England's greatest poet:

“’Tis even thus:

In that I live I love; because I love  
I live: whate’er is fountain to the one  
Is fountain to the other; and whene’er  
Our God unknits the riddle of the one,  
There is no shade or fold of mystery  
Swathing the other.”

In fact, it is on this *Divine love* for her kind that the secret influence of a good nurse depends. With tenderest insight she sees in the demented and suffering who throng our wards—

“A body journey’ng onward, sick with toil,  
The weight as if of age upon the limbs,  
The grasp of hopeless grief about the heart,  
And all the senses weakened, save in that  
Which long ago they glean’d and garner’d up  
Into the granaries of memory.”



And her heart goes forth with strong love to the afflicted one,  
whilst her tender watchfulness and care strive—

“To stay his feet from falling, and his spirit  
From bitterness of death.”

Let me now digress for a moment to invite your attention to three ideals of life realising this high type of being, yet separated the one from the other by the bridge of centuries :

During mediæval times, when the thousand years of the so-called Dark Ages brooded as a cloud over continental Europe, two great lights cast their beams athwart the gloom, bringing out the shadows into still darker relief, as though to solace Europe for the decay of learning, which was then at its lowest ebb. The first great luminary appeared just prior to the plunge into mediæval darkness, as though to support with hope those who otherwise would have been given over to absolute despair ; the second near the termination of the Dark Ages, as if to augur the return of the sun of learning in its full lustre.

The first I allude to was that of a noble Roman lady, her work and its momentous results. The woman's name was Fabiola, who as an act of penance founded at Rome the first public hospital that history records ; her example, copied by noble emulation throughout Christian Europe, spread like a flood throughout civilised nations, with the wondrous results you perceive at the present time.

The second great luminary was the Spanish monk Juan Gilberto Joffre, who, tortured by the horror to which wandering outcast lunatics were subjected, built the first asylum for the insane at Valencia in 1409 ; the cities of Saragossa, Seville, Toledo, and Valladolid followed with their respective asylums, and a new era began to dawn, the doctrine of witchcraft and demoniacal possession was doomed, and we stand here to-day a witness to that sterling human instinct which was aroused by these two wondrous characters.

Coming to our own times, we have a signal instance of noble initiative, with self-sacrificing devotion, displayed by a nurse whose name is a household word in every British home, to remind us what one woman by sheer force of character, and by strength of an exalted love, can accomplish. In October, 1854, Florence Nightingale sailed for Scutari with a staff of

seven and thirty devoted nurses to organise nursing of the sick and wounded and to relieve the distress existing amongst the Anglo-French troops during the terrible Crimean campaign. So great was the influence of her self-devotion upon the nation at large, that huge sums of money poured in to establish institutes for nursing and further her great exertions at Scutari ; and thence sprung those noble national brotherhoods termed the Red Cross Service, the St. John Ambulance Association with the numerous affiliated Corps, the medico-psychological nursing classes, and the innumerable nursing guilds throughout the kingdom.

Now, you who have taken your stand amongst others in this great nursing reform, remember that although you cannot all be Florence Nightingales you can all play a noble part in this profession. Brilliant as such achievements are, remember that the noble trend of Christian charity has been in the direction of quiet, unostentatious work, and that the hundreds of thousands who have sacrificed their lives for the relief of suffering humanity have left a record of undying nobility. Do not, I repeat, ignore the *day of little things* ; the most trifling details as they may appear to you are absolutely essential in a nurse's daily work. She must keep her attention continuously upon such little details which insure her patient's happiness and comfort. Securing your patients from unnecessary noise, from surprise, from anxiety, from hurry ; gentleness of handling, quietness of tone, absence of officious interference, the power which foresees the patients' wants, thinking for them ; in fact, the little details connected with their clothing, bedding, bathing, the ventilation and warmth of their rooms, the cheerful encouragement to occupation where allowable, or to amusements when the mind should be diverted from morbid brooding—all these indicate the tact which is of inestimable value in the asylum nurse.

To you charge nurses I would repeat the admirable advice given by Miss Florence Nightingale : " To be ' in charge ' is certainly not only to carry out the proper measures yourself but to see that everyone else does so too, to see that no one either wilfully or ignorantly thwarts or prevents such measures. It is neither to do everything yourself nor to appoint a number of people to each duty, but to insure that each does that duty to which he is appointed. This is the meaning which must be

attached to the words by (above all) those 'in charge' of sick, whether of numbers or of individuals (and I think it is with individual sick that it is least understood). It is often said that there are few good servants now ; I say there are few good mistresses now. They neither know how to give orders nor how to teach their servants to obey orders—*i.e.*, to obey intelligently, which is the real meaning of all discipline." Miss Nightingale wrote these words in the days of crinolines, and I will save you her remarks upon that terrible development in dress ; you may imagine how she inveighed against the fashion of those days. However, we must warmly agree with her in her horror of rustling clothing, rattling keys, and creaking boards and furniture in the sick-room. Another remark of this great teacher of the nursing art I cannot refrain from repeating :

"Walking on tiptoe, doing anything in the room very slowly, are injurious (*i.e.*, in the sick room). A firm, light, quick step, a steady, quick hand are the desiderata, not the slow, lingering, shuffling foot, the timid, uncertain touch. Slowness is not gentleness, though it is often mistaken for such ; quickness, lightness, and gentleness are quite compatible."

A few words on companionships and I have done.

#### *Companionships.*

The young nurse joining a large institution for the first time is usually much impressed by the *esprit de corps*—the spirit of apparent unity obvious amongst the numerous members of the staff ; the spirit of comradeship is to her not only very refreshing and novel, but develops within her a healthy enthusiasm.

It is only later that she discovers that this apparent harmony is to a certain extent broken up by a distinct line betwixt those who aim at the prizes of their profession, and who are determined to work out their moral advancement, and the opposing class, who are devoid of any such instincts or ambitions, or at least careless and indifferent or it may be actively vicious. She will soon learn to discriminate between the two classes and will be drawn to the one or the other by the natural attraction subsisting between similar minds.

Emerson says very truly : "A secret freemasonry runs through all persons of virtuous character ; they cannot be hidden from each other—they mutually attract." We may

also add that a similar freemasonry runs through those who are by nature vicious ; and do what she will, the young nurse will find herself constantly tending towards one or the other camp. You are, therefore, called upon very early to make your choice of friends, and I cannot here insist too strongly on the caution you should exercise. Here it is that a wise officer will often turn the tide in a young girl's destiny by advice and timely suggestion on the desirable associates for her subordinates. By a friend I do not mean mere acquaintances whom you necessarily meet with in constant association with the staff, but those one or two with whom you can exchange the most solemn confidences, to whom you can with confidence entrust your every trouble with a certainty of sympathy in return. The distinguished W. Penn says in his quaint style : " Friends are Twins in Soul, they sympathize in everything, and have the Love and Aversion." And again, if you ask me how such a true friend is to be known, the same writer adds : " A true friend unbosoms *freely*, advises *justly*, assists *readily*, adventures *boldly*, takes all *patiently*, defends *courageously*, and continues a friend *unchangeably*." Remember, friends will not hesitate to tell you your faults, will encourage your lapses neither by levity nor leniency, and will equally expect the same openness upon your own part to themselves.

Whichever of you has the stronger mind will influence the weaker. If *you* are the weaker, you will be under the sway of the stronger, whether she be virtuous or vicious ; if you are the stronger nature, remember the serious character of the responsibility thus cast upon you. Be, therefore, most guarded in the choice of your intimate friends ; and when you have secured such a prize be true as steel to her best interests and—

" This above all,—to thine own self be true ;  
And it must follow as the night the day  
Thou canst not then be false to any man."



