

I bow, and without alluding to the second part of her speech, I give a detailed account of the cause of the death of poor No. 9, not omitting to allude to the disorganisation of the work as the direct cause of the accident, nor to my visit to the General Director's office. As I state this, however, the dull, colourless eyes contract and the face whitens; the Matron bobs up and down upon her chair, as if seated on an air cushion.

"Do you mean to tell me," she flashes out, "that you have actually dared to appeal to the General Director, over my head?"

"I have appealed to no one—so far," I answer. "I have simply made a statement. I have been publicly accused of murder in the hearing of at least ten witnesses, and I intend to defend myself."

With an immense effort, this woman regains command of herself. Doubtless my white, bitter, fearless face has a somewhat terrifying effect. I see its expression in an opposite glass, and it startles me. The volley of abuse, her usual weapon of subjugation, rolls back over her pitiless tongue, and is never uttered.

There is a moment's significant silence, and then I say: "Sister Matthew has made her accusations; all I have to demand is that she shall prove them."

The Matron coughs, her full lips part in the well-known sickening smile. She says, "I think I may as well tell you I do not consider that at all necessary; that I have had several little confidential chats with the Chairman concerning you, from time to time, and these new accusations supported by a Sister so eminently respected both by the Chairman and myself, only convinces us more decidedly than ever, that the wisest plan for all concerned is for you to resign. If you do this quietly, it will save me the necessity of taking more stringent measures. We consider

in thus advising you, that we are dealing with you in the most lenient and considerate manner."

Resign! *Pas si bête!*

"Thank you," I answer politely, "but I have not the slightest intention of resigning. Sister Matthew has formulated her charges, all that remains is for her to prove them—"gross insubordination, neglect of duty, untruthfulness, and general inefficiency." These are very definite accusations. I decline to be condemned unheard."

Keeping her riotous temper in check by an immense effort, the Matron—

"I suppose, Nurse Graham, you are aware that I have the absolute power to discharge you?"

I am quite polite—if daring.

"According to the bye-laws of this Institution, you would be exceeding your authority in doing so," I answer, "and I should appeal to the Committee."

"The Committee would of course uphold my authority without dreaming of hearing your version of the case."

"That I do not doubt. I should then appeal to the Governors."

"The Governors are the Committee, their personal friends, and the tradesmen we employ. It is therefore needless, to state that the Governors always support the Committee."

"I think it quite possible your reasoning is correct. But in that case, as I am unjustly accused, I should go still further. If I am unable to obtain justice at the hands of the trustees, for the public, of this Institution, I should consider it my duty to myself and to my fellow Nurses to appeal to the public itself, and I should perform that duty at any cost."

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