

The London Hospital Again.*To the Editor of the Nursing Record.*

SIR,—You have always shown yourself so true and unflinching a friend of Nurses that I ask you to publish the enclosed correspondence in your widely read columns, so that others may learn, from my bitter experience, what hope there is of justice for any woman who enters the service of the London Hospital. I must publicly express my gratitude, however, to those two or three members of the House Committee of that Institution who have done their best to obtain justice for me, although, previously, I was an entire stranger to them. And I have proofs in my possession that my appeal has not been altogether futile. Encouraged by this, I shall never now desist until a public inquiry into the management of the Nursing Department of the London Hospital has been secured.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully;

MARY FISHER.

*December 19th, 1892.*TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE OF THE
LONDON HOSPITAL.

GENTLEMEN,—I entered the London Hospital in 1891, and, from May 4th, was appointed as a regular Probationer, signing a formal agreement, binding myself to work in the wards of the London Hospital for the complete term of two years, in order to obtain a Certificate of training as a Nurse, and so be enabled, hereafter, to earn my livelihood. This agreement, I submit, is morally, if not legally, as binding upon you—as the governing body of the Hospital—as upon the Probationer who signs it; and should never be broken by you without good and sufficient cause being shown, and, then, only after a full and fair investigation into definitely formulated charges.

One evening, in the second week of November—I am not sure of the exact day—I had been on duty for the customary twelve hours, with unusually heavy cases; I was quite worn out, was too fatigued, even, to stay up for supper, and was physically incapable of obeying the orders given that day—that the Nurses were to follow the House Governor over the roofs of the Hospital in order to learn the means of escape, in case of fire. I would humbly submit that it is a good example of the highly humane feeling, and thoughtful care for the Nurses' health and strength which characterises the management of the London Hospital, that between 10 and 11 o'clock, on a bitterly cold November night—of all the possible hours of the year—should be selected to drag women, exhausted by the arduous

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work involved in twelve hours' attendance on the sick, over a dangerous roof, in order to make them acquire knowledge, which certainly would be much more easily, more safely, and better acquired, in broad daylight.

But I was worn out with fatigue and went to bed, and this was termed a "breach of discipline." On Wednesday, November 16th, I was sent for, and informed, by the Matron—without any explanation of the facts by me being permitted—that this constituted my "crowning offence," that she had previously had "unsatisfactory reports" from the Sisters concerning my work, and that, therefore, my services would not be required after December 16th. I naturally requested to know the precise meaning of the word "unsatisfactory," but the Matron replied that "there was nothing definite against" me, "for the Sisters had not time to go into details." I was astonished to find myself thus condemned, and deprived of my livelihood—not only without a hearing, but actually upon secondhand, indefinite, and anonymous statements; and I humbly protest against such an unjust system. The Matron of the London Hospital—unlike this official in every other Hospital—as you are well aware, hardly ever enters the wards, and cannot, therefore, perform the chief duty which Matrons are appointed to fulfil—the personal supervision of the work of her department and her subordinates. She is, therefore, of necessity, dependent entirely upon the reports of others, and these reports, I understand, are actually given verbally, and seldom or never in writing. They, certainly, are made behind the back of the person chiefly affected, who, it appears, is never afforded the opportunity of knowing or refuting any second-hand or third-hand slanders which anyone may circulate against her, and which may be, and apparently generally are, solemnly copied into the official register, and thus may be brought up officially, and with the appearance of proven facts, at any future time, to her detriment.

The Matron, however, said that she would recommend me as a Nurse, if I gave her as a reference to anyone wishing to employ me, which appeared to me strange if she considered me so "unsatisfactory." But she fixedly declined to reconsider her decision, or permit me to stay my remaining five months in the Hospital, in order that I might obtain my certificate of training. I, consequently, appealed to you as the governing body of the Hospital, in order that I might have a chance of clearing my character, or, at any rate, might learn the precise nature of the charges made against me. As you are aware, those charges proved to be trivial and vague in the extreme;

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