

drop into anecdotage respecting the little tribulations of my nursing life. Mind, they are all minor worries over which I can laugh now, though they certainly were trying at the time and they are all true.

They began straight away the first night I was a probationer at a large and celebrated London hospital in the early eighties. My bedroom, which I shared with another pro, was a portion of a warehouse which was divided off into cubicles for us. They had no windows, but a glass roof gave light, and—anyhow, the first night I slept there—moisture from above. The room was furnished with Spartan simplicity and a fellow probationer, who favoured me with harrowing details of our life, the hard work and the soreness of her feet. They certainly were pretty bad. I hear her rambling on now, whilst I struggle, quite ineffectually, with my capstrings for the next morning. But my troubles began when I got into bed; it was raining, and drops of rain found their way through the skylight, and fell, now on my face, now on my head or my hands, in the most irritating manner. I was a mild person in those days, but I was fairly riled as I dragged that truckle bed about to find a dry spot. Finally, I gave it up in despair, and spent my first night in hospital with an umbrella over my head to keep the rain off!

The next morning I was called at 6 a.m., and plunged out of bed with youthful enthusiasm, to the great irritation of my room-mate, who counted upon a good twenty minutes' more sleep. However, she gave me some sleepy directions as to where to find the bath-room—it was down in a sort of cellar—and asked me to take her (empty) water jug and try and get her some water—hot if possible. After my cold bath I followed the sound of voices and unearthed a kitchen and servants, and, handing in my jug, I demanded hot water, adding, as a concession, "and I will wait and take it up with me." I remember the cook's "What cheek! I wonder what the nusses will be coming to next," and "Don't you come down to my kitchen again." However, she gave me some hot water; but I was greatly struck with the rudeness of the servants and the primitive washing arrangements. I may say throughout my probationer time one of my rather prominent minor worries was the lack of adequate accommodation for our bathing and for emptying our slops, &c. Primitive is a mild term to use, and the arrangement by which we were expected to have made our beds, emptied our slops, and reduced our rooms to good order, to say nothing of washing and dressing ourselves before 6.40 a.m., led to an unholy scramble and most sketchy bed-making.

Another of the minor tribulations of my early probationer days was the sweeping. I was given a broom, some tea-leaves, and instructions to "sweep

one side of the ward and pull the lockers out." I made a guess as to what a locker was, and joggled the wretched things forward and lumped the tea-leaves down in heavy patches and proceeded to entangle myself, the bedstead legs, the chairs, and those awful lockers in the broom in my efforts to "sweep the side," encouraged by the well-meaning advice of the undisguisedly amused patients. Keenly aware of the totally inadequate result of my efforts, I reached the lowest depths of despair and humiliation when someone in a blue dress came from the background and surveyed my labours, whilst I fronted her, hot, flushed, and defeated, leaning on that beastly broom.

The making of bricks without straw was also a minor tribulation of probationers in those days. All kinds of cleaning were expected to be done for which very scanty materials were provided, and the more particular probationers provided themselves with various appliances in the shape of dusters, polishing paste and leathers, &c., with which to reach the requisite standard of perfection; the tops of ward cupboards, &c., had to be cleaned, but no steps were provided, and you clambered about on stools placed on ward tables to reach them, whilst you performed gymnastic exercises on the back of the bedsteads to hang up the little checked cotton curtains with which they were surrounded.

A minor tribulation, that bade fair to be a big one, was a sharp attack of pneumonia I had when I was a probationer of about nine months' standing, by which time I was sharing an attic with another probationer. The cubic air space of that attic was insufficient for one, let alone two. It was the depth of winter—Christmas-time—and there was not the slightest chance of a fire, as the scanty furniture effectually blocked the apology for a fireplace. I remember that I crawled along to the end of my bed in the night, possessed myself of my water jug and drank all the contents that I did not slop down the front of my nightdress. I recollect the kind-hearted housemaid who was sent to wash me, which she proceeded to do in primitive fashion with ice-cold water (hot water continued for long to be a great luxury), and how on Christmas Day she triumphantly brought me "something from the Sisters' dinner"—the something proving to be a substantial plate of roast goose and accessories; and my temperature was 104°! She was hurt, poor soul, that I could not eat it. I remember how they finally warded me, and I lay in state in a kind of tent, and felt a sort of luxury in watching the others working, whilst I lay comfortably conscious of being out of it. I also recollect the doubts that assailed me when, on visiting day, I heard my next-door neighbour, a convalescent typhoid, having various dainties stowed into her locker. Ought I to report to Sister or not; could I honourably give the woman away; could I allow her to injure her-

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