

like a Madonna. The beds were painfully neat, and the snowy white counterpanes wonderfully draped. The centre table and window-sills shone like mirrors; there was not a speck of dust anywhere; on each locker and table cut flowers and pot plants were arranged. When "off duty," we made our beds, dusted our cubicles, and tidied ourselves, and at 8.30 the bell rang for prayers.

I sat down to breakfast afterwards, but was called from the centre table to bring the tea for the probationers, and before breakfast was over I had learnt what was meant by being "servant of all."

There were not enough teacups to go around, and before the servant had found sufficient it was time for us to go on duty. So I began my first day's work in Z Hospital with a crust of bread for breakfast. On reaching No. 12 ward I found everything in confusion, the probationer had been sent on special duty, and consequently, as Granny said, "Sister Hansom was on the warpath." She was abrupt and quick, and kept forgetting that I was a raw probationer. The Staff Nurse was far too busy to instruct me, so she sent me to clean brasses in the bathroom, and scrub lotion basins. As I returned to the ward with the latter I found a little, fussy man lecturing a class of students around one of the beds. The nurse beckoned to me, and I wriggled my way through the students to her side, and was rewarded with a basin of dirty cotton-wool and bandages.

"Bring the tray back," she said, nodding towards the bathroom. As I returned with the empty tray the great, little man fixed me with his eagle eye and growled,

"Was that sterilized?" Sister Hansom handed him another tray, and replied,

"Yes, Sir John."

A few minutes afterwards a gong sounded through the house, and Sir John and the students left the ward.

Sister Hansom stopped to ask why the patients had not had lunch, and then saying,

"Get Smith ready for operation, and take her to the theatre," she swept out of the ward.

I had heard of operations galore, but only of one kind of theatre; however, Granny again came to the rescue, and before I had got Smith into slippers and gown a merry-faced young man popped his head around the corner, and cried "Top of the morning to you all," then nodding towards Smith, he added, "I won't do her to-day" and disappeared. I went to look for Sister Hansom and give her the message, I found her very cross. "You must always come for me as soon as a doctor appears," she said, "remember that in future."

She had scarcely been gone a minute when two serious-looking men, with note-books came into the ward; remembering my instructions I ran along the landing to find Sister Hansom, and nearly collided with the Staff Nurse who was bringing the patients' lunch on a large tray.

"A nurse is never allowed to run except in case of fire," she said smilingly, "where were you going?" I explained.

"You should have told me first, who are the doctors. Well, never mind, I'll go to the ward, you will find Sister at lunch in the kitchen." I made my way to the small kitchen that was used by the nurses of the landing, and found a merry gathering of nurses and two Sisters having tea and toast. As soon as Sister Hansom heard of the two doctors in her ward she went there, but returned in a moment with the Staff Nurse, and they laughed over my mistake in thinking a couple of students were visiting physicians, then such a storm of ridicule and abuse descended on my devoted head during the time I was having lunch with the other probationers that I never mistook a student for anything else afterwards.

Twelve o'clock was the patients' dinner hour, and I was sent for forks and spoons. I carried off all I found, and would have got into hot water with the other probationers, if the ward-maid had not taken pity on my ignorance and shielded me. Then I was instructed to bring the dinners, and told to ask for "three chops, one chicken, two fish, two beef teas, and six fulls." I stammered over the "fulls," and Sister Hansom asked,

"How many patients are on full diet?" and then I received six plates of meat and vegetable.

After the patients' dinner I swept the ward for the fourth time that day, then we bustled round and tidied up, and at two o'clock I went to the probationers' dinner. The Staff Nurse went off duty at three, and I was in possession of the ward until nine o'clock at night. Sister Hansom came in several times and gave me directions, but Granny was my best helper.

The afternoon and evening work consisted in attending to the needs of the fourteen patients. Some of them were restless and ill, others were cross and tired. Lizzie was all four. They had all to be made comfortable for the night, the beds tidied and the white counterpanes folded neatly and replaced by red blankets. Then there was bread-and-butter to be cut, and tea prepared for them at four, and at seven another lightmeal of milk and soup and bread-and-butter. At eight the ward was settled for the night; the flowers had been removed, the floor swept, and the gas lowered. Then the bandages

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)