

'AT THE OPTION OF THE MATRON,' become an attachée of the private staff, and sweated out of three-fourths of her earnings for a whole year. Where is the justice and fair-dealing of a system that embraces such a rule as this?

The Home Sister, during my time at the Hospital, was unfrocked, put into probationer's uniform, and went back to finish her term in the wards. Here was a case of a Probationer who might have spent most of her time attending to the arrival of new Nurses, &c., and been graduated at the end of two years with a certificate of training in the wards. Why should another Nurse, not long at the Hospital, be taken away from her work in the wards and appointed Home Probationer, and spending most of her time and energy running from floor to floor and from room to room to see if the Nurses conformed to the rules in their domestic arrangements? This is certainly not Nursing experience. What Nursing experience can the Sisters (Probationers) who spend their time in the office writing letters, &c., gain? How can certificates legitimately be given for Nursing work which has not been done?"

Here the complaint is made of the total lack of forethought in the distribution of Nurses in the wards. In one is to be found three Nurses to look after a dozen patients; in another only two for twenty to twenty-four—one Probationer after ten weeks' experience being left in entire charge during the absence of her colleague.

"As another instance of the lack of supervision let me state that a Probationer in the sick room for Nurses told me she had been admitted without a personal interview with any one to the Hospital; and although she had been an inmate of the Institution during five weeks, she never had spoken to the Matron, and only had seen that person once when crossing the garden. As a Probationer expressed it, 'The Matron never comes into the wards, at least not once in a blue moon—she doesn't like the look of sick people, evidently.' Nor did I during my experience witness the looming of either such phenomena."

On the 19th inst., article No. 2 comments upon the Nurses' work and their food:—

"Yesterday I recorded my experiences with regard to the extravagant wastefulness and mismanagement on the one hand, and the unfair manner in which the Nurses and the public are treated in order to produce money for the Hospital on the other. To-day I propose briefly to describe the food given to the Nurses and the general routine of work which they are supposed to do. For the Nurses as a class I have only the highest praise, and from the many women who work steadily, arduously, long after their feet have become sore with constant standing or walking and their brain weary with the worry and anxiety of the work to be done during the long hours of duty in the wards. I learned lessons in forbearance, self-sacrifice, and thoughtfulness that I never shall forget,

A loud bang on one's door at ten minutes to six in the morning wakes one with a start and signifies that it is time to rise, for Nurses are expected to be in the dining-room at half-past six. Breakfast consists of bread and butter, cold meat or sardines, and tea or coffee. The tea is fairly good, but the coffee is of a sickly clay colour and is usually tasteless if not nasty. It did not vary much during my time at the Hospital: it was always muddy and usually only slightly warm. There was generally

jam on the table, too. I don't know its composition, but it was red, and it only varied in consistency because sometimes it was clear and sometimes it had little sticks in it.

#### RATIONS.

The distribution of rations was a novel disclosure to me. On leaving the dining room each Nurse was given a little square tin of tea, a bag of sugar, and a pat of butter, done up in a piece of paper. These she is expected to keep, and to carry the butter and sugar to and from meals, or go without butter, and be given a kind of brown sugar, the insertion of which into the coffee is like adding insult to injury. The Nurses, objecting to carry these provisions always about with them keep them in the wards or their bedrooms, and often eat their bread dry rather than make a trip to the top of the house or wherever their bedrooms happen to be to fetch the butter.

Fancy having to keep butter, which contracts the flavour of everything else in its vicinity, even in an ice box, either in your pockets, in your bedroom, on in the polluted atmosphere of a ward! The butter, I believe, is fresh and good when it is given out: no one can say the same for it when it has been kept in such places—in summer, too—and carried to and from sundry meals. There can be no economy in this system; no more butter would be eaten if it were kept in a clean, cool place and served decently at the tables at meal time. It struck me as an uncleanly and quite unnecessary custom, that only proved want of proper management, and certainly ought to be altered at once.'

Then follows a description of a day's work—the ceaseless rush of twelve hours' toil—depriving the beautiful work of Nursing of all its solace and pleasure.

"And yet when I exclaimed on my first day at the extreme amount of work, the Nurse in charge said grimly, 'Why this is *play* compared to what it is when we are busy with fresh cases.'

#### AND SO TO SUPPER.

Imagine such a day as this—and it is easy to understand, though all Nurses are supposed to have time for a cup of tea at four o'clock, very often they are so busy there is literally no time for this and they must work right through from dinner at noon to twenty minutes past nine at night. And then at half-past nine, think of going into a dining-room filled with long tables, each ornamented by a double row of plates, surmounted by as many nasty smoked kippers! Just imagine, after such a day's work, making a supper off this smoked kipper, some dried cheese, and a glass of soda and milk, or stout!—if you can drink it. After the hard dreary tramping back and forth, until the bones ache and the brains are weary, after witnessing the effects of poverty and vice on every hand, after making beds, sweeping, and waiting on diseased and naturally querulous patients—think of sustaining yourself on such food as dried cheese and a kipper—and this at half-past nine at night!

Such suppers were always too much for me, and afterwards I usually dreamed of kippers swimming in tubs of soda water and eluding my endeavours to annihilate them with a bottle of stout. Supper sometimes consisted of a plate of vegetable soup, without any solid course to follow or a broth flavoured with carrots. Again it was a sardine that usurped the place of the kipper; and occasionally we had a slice of cold meat.

(Continued in the "Hospital World" Supplement.)

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