

This system is most unfair on the Ward Sisters, and on conscientious and enduring members of the staff. By means of these constant holidays flabby women scramble through the three years' course, get certificates, and go forth as private nurses, and are a veritable nuisance to the sick public. These are the sort of private nurses who enquire into "brands" in giving their orders in private houses to be supplied with wine, I have met them and I know them.

Yours,

A VICTIM.

#### BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW.

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—I enclose my mite towards Miss Roger's legal expenses, and I wish it were more.

I take the opportunity (if you will kindly grant me space) to beg all nurses who possibly can, to support Miss Rogers, not for herself alone, but for the position of Superintendent Nurse; and I am sure if they could only realize what that position is for one who holds that office first in a Union, they would do so.

The Nurse is an unwelcome addition to the staff, and is made to feel so; the Master and Matron resent losing any authority, and in my case lost no opportunity of snubbing and insulting me in every possible way before officers and inmates; the nurses resent having anyone to direct and control them, the guardians do not see this and put it down that the Superintendent Nurse is a nuisance.

I have felt truly sorry for the guardians I worked under, until I could not help seeing some of them purposely ignore my position, although, I am sure, not one of them would be really bad enough to uphold things had they known the truth. In justice to Masters and Matrons in general, I must say I know many of them would be shocked at the unscrupulous acts of some of a different stamp; but I have heard from good authority that the majority of Superintendent Nurses are unhappy; for myself I would rather see any one I loved sweeping a crossing than in that unsatisfactory position under present laws.

Let me give one instance of my experience of Poor Law justice.

I took up a local paper, saw the guardians had been holding an inquiry as to why so many officers had left, and it was decided it was owing to my undue interference, and the Chairman a J.P., and also a professing religious man, was sorry he could not uphold me. I was more than astonished, as, supposing I had been ever so bad, justice demanded I should at least have heard the charges and evidence. I guessed some falsehoods had been told, as I had heard many before my face, and thought it quite time to have a proper understanding with the Guardians or a Local Government Board inquiry.

I asked for an interview with the Board of Guardians, which they did not grant. Had they done so I should have told them that with the smallest amount of justice they could only blame me for two nurses leaving, as the other officers I was afraid to speak to, or the Master would make mischief.

I was thankful one of the nurses left without a public scandal. Soon after she came I found her romping (in duty hours) with a male officer, her face blackened, and the Matron watching proceedings. I

called the nurse out of the room, quietly asked her to go back to her wards and wash her face. A few days later I was told by seven people that there was a caricature of the nursing staff in the office where the Master spent a great deal of his time, and I was represented as an old cat smacking this nurse, and the Master had put it there.

This same nurse was most attentive to male officers. I frequently found one particular man in her room, and always told her it must not be so again; there was always some excuse. However I found them at tea together with another nurse. I was too vexed to say anything then, but sent for the nurses to my room later on and told them I could not look over it again, the next time they transgressed in this way I must report it to the Committee. They promised not to offend again, but I could see they were only laughing at me, no doubt knowing that I should be taken no notice of. It was one of Matron's taunts to ask me what good did I do by going to the Committee. I spoke to the man and pointed out how bad it would be for the girls if I had to report them; he promised never to go again—the next day this man spent the afternoon in the nurse's room!

I went round her wards one evening, asked her to pay special attention to two patients, went back again shortly afterwards, missed her, went to her room, found it full of men drinking and smoking. A few days after she resigned, and this was the nurse I was blamed in the papers for unduly interfering with by a Board on which sat three representatives of the law. This is only one act of injustice, of which I could quote many, which makes one's blood boil to think of, and what I am afraid many nurses have to suffer.

We know pioneers, as a rule, have a rough time, but surely the Local Government Board ought to stop it now especially when it is a case of a defenceless woman against several men, hemmed in by people who are anxious to baffle her in every possible way.

So my sister nurses let me beg you to help the cause in any way you can for the sake of truth and justice, and more than all may God defend the right.

Yours gratefully,

ANNIE E. ROSSITER.

Shirley Cottage,  
Beulah Road,  
Thornton Heath.  
December 30th, 1900.

[The only method of effecting Poor Law Nursing Reform is to go to Headquarters. A Nursing Department must be instituted at the Local Government Board Office, with efficient Nursing Officers to direct it in co-operation with the Medical Department. Tinkering and botching is only prolonging inefficiency in organization and terrible suffering upon individual nursing officers, placed in positions of responsibility without adequate authority to maintain order. Influential Poor Law Infirmary Matrons might take up this detail of reform as a New Century duty, and approach the Local Government Board on the matter; no doubt delegates from the Matrons' Council, Workhouse Nursing Association, National Council of Women, and others would co-operate; if Miss Louisa Twining could be induced to give her support as Chairman we feel sure good could be effected. Meanwhile the poor patients suffer.—ED.]

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