

almost inaudible amidst the clatter and confusion which reigns supreme, until about seventy women (limp and faded at this hour), have scrambled into their own particular chairs, and each becomes, the possessor of one of those formidable wedges of cake. I struggle manfully with my portion, and wash it down, half-masticated, with liberal draughts of milk, until I become aware that my opposite neighbour, who is supperless, is making a critical and unabashed survey of my person, and, judging from the twinkle in her eye, seems to be enjoying my evident discomfort.

Suddenly the Sister's restless and anxious eye lights upon her.

"Why are you eating no supper, Nurse Damian she inquires. "Are you ill?"

"No, Sister," my *vis-à-vis* answers demurely, with a smile, which is child-like and bland; "only I am subject to night-mare!"

"Fiddle-de-dee!" the Sister answers, laughing. "It is that hamper from home. Now, confess you have had jam, and cakes, and fresh eggs for tea; and, later, ham-sandwiches, potted shrimps, and ginger-bread. Ah! well do I know the *menu* and its dire results. I was a Staff-Nurse once." And here she gives a little sigh, and rising, devoutly thanks the Almighty for food we have eaten, and which her own digestive organs have been spared.

A few minutes later I find myself in the Home Sister's office. When I enter, she is seated in a chair before her writing-table, and I imagine it is Hospital etiquette which prevents her rising upon the entrance of a stranger, or even bidding her welcome. I mentally classify her—genus, toad; she is squat of figure and dark of face, with a high wrinkled forehead and receding chin. She takes a furtive glance at me, and hands me a copy of the rules, for which I thank her politely.

"Read the rules and regulations before you go on duty," she begins, in an uneducated voice (quite indescribable), "and please to keep them. Some Nurses think it vastly clever to evade them; but I warn you it does not pay in the end."

With "Alice in Wonderland," when she suddenly took to growing, I feel an impulse to cry out, "Good-bye, feet!" so contemptuously upright do I become. "I have signed a paper," I answer, a little hotly, "to keep the rules and regulations of the Hospital. *Nothing* could be more repulsive to me than to be reproved by you for breaking my word."

COSY-COTTON FLANNEL AND FLANNELETTES are admirably adapted for this ever-changing climate. For Night-Gowns, Dressing Jackets, Dressing Gowns, Shirts, Pyjamas, Skirts, Blouses, Tennis, &c. Plain Colours, Stripes and Checks, from 4½d. per yard. Patterns Free (mention *Nursing Record*).—C. Williamson, 91, Edgware Road, London.

"That is very heroic on your part," she continues, with a little sneer. "Perhaps you will have the kindness to listen to what I wish to say, and I should prefer you not to reply excepting to questions. Your first duty," she continues, dogmatically, "is loyalty to the Matron"—(mental reservation to ask her if that lark was caught on the wing or taken from the nest)—"which includes absolute obedience, and to carry out that loyalty in word and deed, it becomes your duty to acquaint me, at once, should sedition come to your ears. Remember the Matron is all powerful here, and *your future character and career are in her hands*. The Committee have absolute confidence in her judgment, and never fail to support her views. It is well to digest this fact: never by word or thought venture to question her management. You are absolutely ignorant; your opinion is valueless; and any suggestion on your part to a person of her experience savours of impertinence. I regret you will find in the Wards of some of the older Sisters a spirit of opposition to our methods; *but we are very well informed in these matters*, and have no doubt that all active opposition will eventually evaporate. When you have been a week in a Hospital you will recognise the fact that gossip, spite, and jealousy are ruling factors in its machinery, and will doubtless find it wise to keep in with the powers that be."

Dead silence.

"You have evidently a temper?"—interrogatively.

I make no answer; and, oh, Jean! what could I say, excepting words of passionate anger and contempt? I feel growing whiter and whiter; I can hear my heart thump; the earth seems crumbling under my feet. Goodness, purity, honour, truth—are they all beautiful, cruel illusions? Only this morning—

"Have you heard of a seditious society called the British Nurses' Association?" my tormentor questions.

"I have never heard of its seditious tendency," I reply.

"What have you heard of it?"—sharply.

"Nothing but good"—calmly.

"Then you have been misinformed; and I may as well tell you at once that the Matron permits no Nurse belonging to it to work in this Hospital—its tendency is most pernicious. It is a self-constituted and totally unqualified body, and it is an attempt to interfere between lawful Hospital authorities and their Nurses. Its great aim

PARADOX EXTRACT OF MEAT AND MALT BISCUITS (Patented) are a boon to Nurses and Invalids. The *Lancet* says: "We agree that these Biscuits are rich in bone-forming materials." In 1s. tins. Write to Thorp and Co., Glossop, for sample and particulars. Special quotations for biscuits in bulk to Hospitals, &c. [2]

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)