

points out to the Secretary that these girls whose statements she sent up were absolutely unreliable and unscrupulous?—And what does she think of the statements they made about her? They made a very grave charge against the Matron, as they made about me.

125. I want to point out to you that you are quite wrong in supposing the Matron did not treat you with absolute fairness in writing that letter. Then, I think the Minister, after reading that letter, simply sent down word that you were to be dismissed?—Yes; but why did the Matron keep these statements so long? Why did she not act immediately on them if they were correct?

126. In addition to this, I am going to ask you whether you know the girl C——?—Yes.

127. Have you any feeling of enmity for her?—Not that I am aware of.

128. Are you friendly with her?—I do not know. I suppose, as much as I am with the other girls.

129. She had made certain statements about you, and I may tell you she did so after being warned that she need not make any statements against you if she did not choose to. She was told also she would have nothing to gain or to fear by making the statements. This girl was examined separately, and knew nothing about what was going on. I will read what she says?—Who asked the girl to make the statement?

130. I did, and I warned her as I have stated. She then said she wished to make a statement, and I said I would take it down. This is what she volunteered to me: “Miss Howden and I were amongst the fowls. I had had a few words with Miss Mills about an apron. I told Miss Howden about it, and I said the staff were always going on to me about something. She said it was a hellish place to live in. I heard her make the same remark to F—— B—— and H—— M——. She used to ask me why the staff had a down upon me, and asked me why I stayed here, and why I did not stand up for myself and hold my own. She told me she did not agree with the Matron and the staff. I asked her why she stayed here. I do not remember her answer. When at the fowls she used to talk about the absconding girls. She did not tell us of the girls absconding. She has often left us outside part of the time by ourselves. We could have got away had we chosen. She was constantly giving presents to the girls.” Is there any truth in that statement?—Absolutely not a word of it is true. The girls could never have got away on any occasion, because I was there the whole time they were doing their work.

131. You know a girl named L—— R——?—Yes.

132. Under the same circumstances she made this statement: “In the workroom one day she said, ‘Matron treats the girls most unjustly’”: Is that true?—I do not think so. What was it about?

133. Have you ever made such a remark?—If a girl had been punished, and told me, I may have said it was very unjust.

134. Do you think that was proper?—I do not know the circumstances, and I do not think I could have said it.

135. The statement goes on: “A reporter came one day. Miss Hunt was showing him round, and Miss Howden came from her office to the workroom, where I was sewing. Asked me if I knew anything of what was going on in the papers. I said I had heard of it from the girls. She said I hope they will get a good blowing up, because it would take them down a peg or two. The Matron took too much upon herself. Another evening when I came over from prayers Miss Howden was the only member of the staff on the first-class side. She told me she wanted some oil for her stove-lamp, and that I was to come and stand on the door until she got it. If I heard anything I was to cough loudly. She would have asked for the loan of some oil, only the Matron and the staff were such sneaks, &c. They would say she had been taking it all the time. One afternoon she was in charge of the working party outside. She let us do what we liked. She said we could sit down and have a rest, and we rested nearly all the afternoon. She lost some blotter one day, and we inferred from what she said that Miss Hunt had taken it. She said, ‘What could you expect from the girls when the staff sets such an example?’” Is that true?—That is absolutely untrue—for instance, I always had methylated spirits for my lamp.

136. Everything these girls say is untrue?—These statements are untrue. I do not know how they could have said such things. I think these girls have been with the Matron two or three times before they made these statements.

137. You say everything these girls say is absolutely untrue?—When the things are brought up about me they are believed absolutely, yet when the girls make the most serious charge against somebody else no notice is taken of it. They are liars at once.

138. I do not know what you are referring to?—They made a very serious charge against the Matron. In their presence I told the Matron what they had said about her. Miss Hunt was also present. F—— B—— told her.

139. *The Commissioner.*] I do not know what you are referring to?—It was so awful I said I would take no notice of it.

140. *Mr. Russell.*] I would not take any notice of it if I were you?—It was a very grave charge indeed.

141. *Mr. Pope.*] You knew the Matron had appointed you, and not the Department?—Yes.

142. You knew you were responsible to the Matron alone?—Yes.

143. You recognised she had power to vary your duties?—Yes.

144. With regard to your statement that your salary was fixed at £60 and reduced by the Matron to £52, what is your authority for that?—The Matron first saw Mrs. Scale, and told her the Department had given her permission to engage a clerk at £60.

145. Later, did the Matron tell you definitely the Department had agreed to your having £60 a year?—She told me the Department had allowed £60.

146. Did you ever complain to me about your position at Te Oranga?—I never had an opportunity. You know you never came near me.