

them to postpone the question." In the financial accounts there is a capital sum of £802, a balance of £72 from last year contributing to that amount.

When my sister came to the Home, nearly eleven years ago, there were sixteen nurses and probationers, and they earned £335, while there was a debt of £114. Last year the staff had increased to forty nurses and nine probationers, and the earnings were over £1,700. For this staff of nurses there are two bedrooms, containing altogether nine beds; and there is one not very large sitting-room, where they have their meals and live. In cases of sickness, which must necessarily often occur, from the nature of a nurse's life and work, there is no room where they can rest and be quiet, but they must share the common bedroom, and night and day be liable to constant disturbance. This is bad enough for the invalids, but the healthy also suffer at such times, coming in, as they do, from sick rooms. Surely they need a little fresh air, but how can they have it? Looking merely at it from a business point of view, it is working at a loss; for if you let the machinery get out of order it means a breakdown. But is the health of the nurses not to be considered at all?

I think that the public—who on Tuesday so truly and unanimously bore testimony to the valuable services of the nurses—will see that my sister had cause for complaint. And that it was not merely a question of being turned out of her room once a week, though the inconvenience of that was great; obliging her to interview people who came on business in a small hall, and write her letters either in the kitchen or her bedroom, that compelled her to resign a post she had held for nearly eleven years. This brings me to the letter of my sister, which Mr. Jackson read, and which he stated she stuck to. I think it only fair to her that the apology for that letter, which she wrote the following week to the committee, should also be published, and the public can then judge for themselves.

That Mr. Hutchinson should have alluded to a small matter which occurred a year or two ago, and which the committee at the time certainly did not take a serious view of, as they never even censured my sister, seems to prove the weakness of their case, but I am sorry Mr. Hutchinson did not know that the alterations he suggested in the books—or rather the washing books—to which I fancy he must have alluded, have been carried out by Miss Corvan ever since to the best of her ability. For nearly eleven years my sister has worked with her whole heart for that Home. Results speak for themselves. Mr. J. Barber, had he been able, and other members of the committee, had they been willing, could have borne testimony to the harmony and courtesy with which they worked together for the greater part of that time. Of this, my sister and I must ever have a grateful and pleasant remembrance, and also of much personal kindness. But "the enemy sowed tares," and so after many years' work my sister is compelled to retire. As many Sheffield people have expressed a hope that her work and that of her valuable nurses, should not be lost to the town and neighbourhood, she must try and work without a committee as they cannot work with her. Apologising for taking up so much of your valuable space,—I remain, yours faithfully, S. E. CORVAN.

Swile Rectory, Taunton, 21st May, 1888.

THE DORSET COUNTY HOSPITAL.

BY ETHEL GORDON FENWICK

(Late Matron of St. Bartholomew's Hospital).

IT gives me much pleasure, in accordance with the request of the Editor, to open a discussion in the columns of this journal concerning the *raison d'être* of the unfortunate crisis through which the Dorset County Hospital is now passing, as it is a matter which must necessarily interest the nursing profession.

It appears that part of the lay committee and some members of the medical staff are at variance concerning the best method (for, from what I hear, I am convinced that *all* desire the best method) of nursing the patients efficiently. The lay committee are of opinion that owing to the small number of beds, their matron (a gentlewoman) should be a thoroughly-trained nurse, and act as "sister" in the wards, taking the medical men's orders, and superintending their performance, as well as being responsible for the housekeeping and general management of the hospital. Two members of the medical staff are keenly opposed to this arrangement, and prefer a housekeeper pure and simple as administrator, and that the entire charge and responsibility of nursing the sick—which, of course, is the most important item in the whole of a hospital's internal management—should be in the hands of a head nurse, thereby inevitably creating a division of authority in this small institution—I say advisedly small institution, because an arrangement for division of labour, which may be necessary in a hospital of 300 to 800 beds, is not the most efficacious method of working a hospital comprising 50 beds—the size only of many wards in large institutions.

After some years' experience of hospital life, and having worked in a small country hospital—concerning the nursing of which the self-same discussion took place some nine years ago, and which ended in the lady superintendent acting also as ward sister, with thoroughly-trained charge or staff nurses under her, to the ultimate satisfaction of all concerned—I should like to state unhesitatingly, that my entire sympathy is with the lay committee on this question, and proceed to give my reasons.

We all know the inevitable result of a house divided against itself, and I believe the Dorchester Hospital, after changing its matron *six times in three years*, cannot be in a satisfactory condition—at least I hear, and am little surprised at the intelligence, that matters are in a most disorganised state. The first and principal sufferers under these circumstances are, of course, the patients, and therefore the matter becomes at once interesting and of importance to the public at large.

I believe the majority of women, at least those endowed with average energy, intelligence, and love of occupation, will agree with me, that to superin-

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