

or homes. They enter into the work with the utmost zeal, and give freely of their time. Undoubtedly their work is of value, to the hospital, to the patients, and to themselves. To the hospital, because of the needed help in money and clothing which they secure for it; to the patients because of their active sympathy with them, and, perhaps, timely help; to themselves, in giving them an intelligent idea of the efforts that are being made to relieve suffering humanity, and of the work that such efforts entail. Of course, with so many in the field, there is every variety of lady manager; from the one, who, with business ability and experience, knows how to repose confidence in the officers of the institution, and how to uphold their authority, down to the one who suspects all salaried officers of wrong-doing, and encourages tale-bearing from the subordinates and the patients. All, however, work with the best of motives, and if they err, it is generally owing either to excess of zeal, or to a want of knowledge of the needs of such institutions. To many it is of value in teaching them what cleanliness, tidiness, and good housekeeping mean. As a small example of this I shall close by relating the following incident:—

A lady whom I know, charming, highly intellectual, always zealous for reform, heard some tales of a hospital which cast serious reflections on the officers of the institution. She believed what she heard, was loudly indignant, and very soon had herself appointed as an inspector under the State Board of Charities. The first hospital she visited was the one about which the tales had been told. She went on her mission of inspection, prejudiced, determined to investigate everything, prepared to condemn, and to urge reform. She came away as loudly enthusiastic as she had before been indignant. Such system, order, cleanliness, tidiness, she had not dreamed of, and the evident ability and fine work of those in charge impressed her greatly. She herself relates that on reaching home, her daughter, who had accompanied her, immediately set to work to tidy the drawers and closets. Since then she has inspected many hospitals, and has become the staunch friend and defender of those who, placed in positions of great responsibility, are ever striving after perfection, and who, working hard to secure it, feel most acutely every mistake or act of carelessness committed by those who are under their authority and in the service of the hospital.

DISCUSSION.

MISS ISLA STEWART wondered where the balance of power lay in hospitals which had so many Committees!

MISS GEORGIANA HILL felt strongly the great need of having a mixed Board of men and women. She had tried hard to get this at the Hospital for Incurables, on Putney Heath, but at present the Board were entirely opposed to the admission of women to their Councils. In hospitals for incurables it was much more important to make a comfortable home for the patients than to consider the medical side, for you could only alleviate, not cure. The domestic management was entirely in the hands of men; there was a Matron, of course, and lady visitors, but the latter had no power—women were wanted to help in the everyday working of the hospital, and many comforts might be considered and economies exercised by having women on the Board. Would not the Matrons and nurses present say what could be done in England towards having mixed Boards for all hospitals?

MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK thought this rather a delicate question. She would wish to see women on all administrative Boards, but at present, in the administration of general hospitals—with the exception of the Royal Infirmary at Edinburgh, where there were two women on the Weekly Board, and at Portsmouth, where there were three—only men were on the committees. The domestic department was in the hands of the Matron, and where a hospital was properly administered the Board ought not to interfere with the details of domestic management; they appointed a thoroughly qualified woman, and should not interfere with the details of the work, as long as it was well done. It took years of laborious work to fit a woman for the position of Hospital Matron and Superintendent of Nursing; such women were, as a rule, experts, and she saw difficulty in the future if the placing of women on hospital Boards meant that they were to interfere with the domestic details of the institution. She would not have any Board composed either of men or women in a position where they personally and systematically supervised details, and would strongly object to a woman going on to Hospital, Infirmary, or any Institution Board, to do this special work. If women were put on such Boards, it ought to be on an absolute equality with men, and men composed committees to do administrative work, appointing trained and skilled officers to carry out the details. On an equality with men she would certainly advocate able women being placed on all Boards; but women must be educated in matters of business, and administration, before they would be fitted to occupy such a position. Men had had the advantage of generations of training for such work. Miss Louisa Stevenson, of Edinburgh, was not, as far as she knew, placed on the Board for any special work, but

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)