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Editorial.

Divided We Fall.

THE JULY, 1953, EDITORIAL "Efficiency Dethroned," which appeared in this Journal and which has been widely read and favourably commented upon, is a first great effort in trying to bring to the attention of the Minister of Health just what is wrong in some of our hospitals today.

Quoting the most significant paragraph: "the envious desire of officialdom to deprive the Nursing profession of the initiative in such departments as the one in question" (i.e., the kitchen) is absolutely hitting the nail on the head. It is plain JEALOUSY which is the root of most of our troubles in hospital, particularly of those in the domestic sphere. Jealousy has been successful in removing from Matrons' authority those departments which should reasonably and rightly come under their care.

Many Hospital Management Committees, but not by any means all, have introduced domestic Supervisors to control and manage all domestic staffs in hospitals. The reason commonly given for this action is to give Matrons more time in which to attend to purely nursing matters! We do not think that this quite unsought and unsolicited relief was given as a token of tender regard for Matrons' well-being! Quite definitely better results would have accrued had the Supervisors been placed under the control of the Matrons, for obvious reasons. After all, good nursing of the patients is intimately bound up with clean and wholesome surroundings and who else but Matrons are ultimately responsible for ensuring the necessary high standard of cleanliness for their patients?

Generally speaking, domestic supervisors are not professional women; indeed it would be interesting to know of the necessary qualifications for the posts (if any), and just how many of them have ever attended even elementary lectures on hygiene in order to give them some idea of the degree of cleanliness required to prevent the spread of infection. Should an intimate knowledge of hygiene ever become a necessary qualification for intending Supervisors, then no doubt trained Nurses would be asked to give the lectures!!

However, official stupidity does not end there. For some obscure and secret reason domestic Supervisors come under the control of hospital secretaries, many of them inexperienced and ambitious young men who know less about the cleanliness of hospital kitchens and wards perhaps than the untrained supervisors themselves!

Now this article is not written in a spirit of malice, nor to take a rise out of our very good friends the hospital secretaries, many of whom work harmoniously within

the administrative framework of the hospital. Nor is it to belittle the Supervisors. It is written to underline with thick black lines the fact that ONE well-trained professional woman must ultimately control both the nursing and domestic work in hospitals. The recovery and well-being of the patients depend upon good nursing which can only be successfully given in clean, well-ventilated surroundings. Matrons who have had years of experience of teaching succeeding generations of nurses, and inculcating into them the essential nature of absolute cleanliness are the ones who should finally be responsible for maintaining a high standard of cleanliness in our great institutions today.

Similarly in the kitchens we have this Gilbertian state of affairs. Some hospital caterers may be trained cooks and dieticians, but few of them are trained administrators and understand the psychology of staff management. Again it would be interesting to learn just how many of them had "trained" in any subjects whatsoever, or in any sense of the word. Yet they have been given plenary and autocratic powers in the kitchens and dining rooms. Many of them buy the food, store it, lock it up in unsuitable cupboards and keep the keys; cook it and distribute it without knowing anything whatsoever about diet in disease and health; the necessary amounts of vitamins or the vitamin content of the different foods, or even about the amount of food each person should receive. Much wastage occurs as a result of too much food being sent to the wards which cannot for obvious reasons be returned to the kitchens. Some of them apparently have not the slightest idea of the necessity of strict cleanliness in stores, refrigerators or kitchens and thus outbreaks of food poisoning are caused. When one mentions the word DISCIPLINE and the lack of conscientious time-keeping in such departments—then one is rendered speechless and is deprived of all descriptive powers.

No one doubts that the kitchen is the most important domestic department, where strict cleanliness is of vital importance. It is, therefore, essential that an experienced, well-trained professional woman should be responsible for assuring the required maximum state of cleanliness be maintained and that discipline and good time-keeping be the order of the day. These responsibilities far from preventing Matrons giving their whole time to nursing administration, will enable them to care for their patients and staffs more completely. Matrons, by being in control of all nursing and domestic matters, would restore harmony in our sorely divided hospitals and get rid of the frustrations and obstructions attendant upon dual control.

Finally, in the not unimportant matter of costs, such an arrangement would save a considerable amount of money annually, and release more for new equipment

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