

The Hospital World.

TRYING FOR A HOSPITAL SECRETARYSHIP.

I have tried twice to secure for myself the office of a hospital secretary and I have failed most depressingly on each occasion. Because I have failed I ought to take a seat below the salt and not presume to tell other men anything concerning my views on the subject of attaining a position I much desire, but which I cannot gain. The average man would say I should be silent, yet I do not agree with him, and I will here attempt to jot down a few impressions made upon my tortured mind during the tussles I went through in competing for two hospital secretaryships.

Let me first explain that I spent some time in putting together a letter of application, which at first sight was (according to a couple of easy friends) enough to lead any right-thinking person to honestly believe that I was, at least, equal to the duties of a prime-minister.

Then I was fortunate, singularly fortunate, in receiving excellent testimonials from my superior officer (the secretary of a big London Hospital), from the Chairman of the Weekly Board, from a distinguished clergyman, and from a member of a very exalted family. All of these four individuals had known me for some years. All of them wrote strongly in my favour with rare grace and persuasiveness. My letter and the testimonials were printed and bound together in as elegant a manner as one of the best London firms of stationers could contrive. And off these precious papers went by registered post to the authorities of the institution that I yearned to act as secretary for.

After an anxious spell of waiting I was summoned to attend a meeting of the "selection committee." This cheered me, and I prevailed upon the amiable Mayor of my present district to write flatteringly of me to the Mayor of the distant place I was about to visit. I also prevailed upon the secretary of the medical staff of my hospital to communicate cunningly with the secretary of the medical staff of the hospital I hoped to serve. In addition to turning these stones I discovered a gentleman of high local standing, who personally advocated my claims in a skilful and adroit fashion before several members of the very committee which was to interview and decide for or against me. Who can say I left a single stone unturned?

On the day of the meeting that was to decide my fate, I dressed soberly and with extreme care. I thought myself clear of brain and eye and physically as fit as any insurance company's

medical officer could wish me, were I effecting a policy for £10,000 at death. On reaching the hospital I found a number of other would-be-secretaries, who were also selected candidates. In travelling from my old quarters to the new quarters I had gone first-class: this because I did not desire the society of the other fellows, who would by their apprehensive and nervous speech and manners probably make me like unto themselves. Once inside the new building I had to herd with them. And there, perhaps, was the cause of my undoing. Even a Bernard Shaw would have suffered.

At last it was my turn to be called before the group of directors who were to say "yea" or "nay" for me. They were kindly in some respects, but they were unmistakably harsh in others. They treated me as though I were a criminal at the bar, and this attitude on top of the ridiculously over-wrought condition of the other applicants somewhat unbalanced me. I was in my answers to questions gloomy, flip-pant, incoherent, bluntly lucid, and stupidly awkward by turns. At the end of fifteen minutes I left the board-room a wreck. However, I was no more a wreck than the others in my position, and as I walked down the corridor and rejoined them in the stuffy and unfamiliar room I saw that their cheeks were flushed and their eyes curiously agleam. How I secretly wished that my height was 5ft. 10in. rather than my absurd and actual 5ft. 5in. Given that glorious advantage I felt that I would have been equal to returning without invitation to the board-room and roughly bullying the intellectual men who asked me foolish questions into a unanimous verdict in my favour.

We were a miserable six or eight men, we, who waited and waited with such unaffected eagerness for the result. We all admitted that we had not said in our replies to the shower of cross-examination what we should have said, and we all admitted that we had said what we did not mean to say. One unhappy young man told us that when invited to describe his usual daily duties he had entirely forgotten his accustomed modesty and had taken to himself credit for so much that the chairman with a gasp of surprise had exclaimed: "Well, if you do all that you say you do, what does the secretary himself do?" We were all utterly wretched, and we either paced restlessly up and down the room or sat clutching at the edges of the square mahogany table.

No dentist's waiting-room has ever, or will ever, witness more acute agony than I underwent and saw around me that dismal afternoon. We all knew that we had the tips of our fingers

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