

Hospital Kitchens.*

By Miss E. M. Musson,

Matron, General Hospital, Birmingham.

As the object of this paper is to start a discussion, you will forgive me if it appears somewhat scrappy; if it raises several questions, but comes to no conclusive answers upon any one of them. I do not consider myself an authority on the kitchen department. The kitchen department of a hospital is one of a Matron's greatest responsibilities, and frequently the cause of a considerable amount of worry. The difficulties vary in different hospitals, but happy is the Matron who has none. Difficulties are usually connected with the construction of the kitchen, the apparatus, the cook, the caterer, or the committee.

The construction is a matter with which Matrons seldom have much to do. We may have to make the best of a kitchen which is old and inconvenient, or we may rejoice in one which is modern and well arranged. Having had some experience of the two extremes, may I offer one or two hints (learned from both kinds) to any Matron whose advice is being asked about new buildings. Sufficient space for the requisite number of persons to work in must be allowed, but unnecessary space means unnecessary labour in cleaning. Rounded corners and hard highly glazed materials are as desirable in the kitchen as in the operating theatre, and, in the scullery at any rate, there is distinct advantage in a floor which slopes gently down to a drain. There should be as few division walls as possible, and wide, open archways may with advantage be substituted for doors. A kitchen which is divided from the scullery by two doors and a passage is very inconvenient. Larders and store-rooms should be within easy reach, and these doors must be furnished with good locks. The serving room or the part of the kitchen from which food is distributed should be as near the lift as possible. Good ventilation and plenty of light are essential. Artificial lighting must be carefully arranged, else the cook may not be able to see what she is doing because of her own shadow. In a modern kitchen a convenient place should be provided where the kitchen staff may wash their hands before handling food stuffs, also hot and cold water should be laid on in a convenient place for the filling of buckets, and a proper sink provided where they may be emptied. A thing which strikes me repeatedly in new buildings as well as old is the utter absence of convenience for the persons who do the cleaning. It is fatiguing enough to scrub

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large stretches of terrazzo flooring without having a long walk at intervals to refill the pail. The water, in consequence, is not changed as often as it should be; moreover, human nature being what it is, if no proper place be provided at a convenient distance, you must not be surprised if, while you are looking elsewhere, the pail is quietly emptied down the vegetable sink, or if your nice new earthenware sink in the pantry becomes scratched and discoloured by the rims of buckets. Friction often arises between the maid servants on account of this want. With regard to apparatus, I think it is generally agreed that for large establishments it is most satisfactory, clean, and economical to use steam and gas. As far as my experience goes, the gas ovens, plates, etc., are very convenient, economical in the hands of a careful cook, and give very little trouble if kept thoroughly clean. With steam apparatus it is different; where it is nice, it is very nice, but it is apt to spring horrid surprises upon the unhappy cook if it is not very carefully looked after, and you are largely in the hands of the engineer. I think an elementary course of engineering (also plumbing) would be a great advantage to a Matron. I am not afraid of the cook, and feel quite competent to instruct any other domestic servant, but when first faced with a breakdown in the steam apparatus of kitchen or laundry, an interview with the engineer was quite an ordeal.

I should advise anyone who had to choose a steaming apparatus to visit as many hospitals as possible to see them in working order, and when both Matron and cook say it is "quite satisfactory," make a note of it. A very small thing will put a steamer out of order; some drains are very small and require continual attention, or they will become blocked with grease or small particles of food—a small fish bone across a valve gave endless trouble before it was discovered. Apparently the steamers vary greatly, and each one should be thoroughly studied and understood before it is used, and regularly overhauled by a competent engineer. Perforated zinc trays are better than wire baskets. When kept in really good order, with a properly regulated supply of steam, the steam cookers are economical and labour saving. Steam jacketed boilers are very useful, and give little trouble.

Even in big kitchens there is often a great absence of labour saving device. With steam, gas, and electricity all at hand, it seems absurd, for instance, to see maids turning the handle of the potato peeler, and if sewing machines can be worked by electricity, why not the mincers, etc. A sufficiency of cooking utensils

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