

to interview the candidates and select two or three from whom the Board could make a final choice; or, better still, if the Board are amenable, to send only one candidate before them.

3. In considering the *necessary staff*, and comparing that in a hospital laundry with that in a commercial one, we must bear in mind the great difference in the two systems.

In a trade or public laundry only so many hands are taken on each day as are required for that day's work; and each individual is more or less an expert in her particular line. The manageress engages and dismisses hands according to their capabilities and according to the amount of work which she has to get done.

The ironers are paid by piece-work, and not employed for anything but their own speciality, and the system of payment by result offers every inducement for good work during the hours of employment.

I am not quite sure what is the usual plan in the laundries connected with our large hospitals, but under Poor Law conditions, where paid labour is used, the women are, as a rule, individually appointed by the Infirmary Committee, or even in some cases by the Board itself, and can only be dismissed by the body which engages them. Women once so appointed come automatically under the present Superannuation Acts, deductions being made from their wages. They, therefore, become practically permanent officials, and in London their pay comes out of the Metropolitan Common Poor Fund. This system is utterly bad, as in practice it causes the employment of a fixed number of hands alike when work is slack and when it is abundant. By way of equalising things in some institutions the nurses are allowed during the slack months of June, July, and August to send such articles as fancy blouses and white petticoats to the wash, and these, by necessitating a good deal of extra hand labour, create employment during the slack season.

Again, under this system it is not possible to classify the work to anything like the extent in a commercial laundry. The ironers, for instance, will not have work enough to keep them busy during a whole week, and must therefore be employed on another class of work during certain days. The hands must, therefore, be more of the all-round than the specialist type, and thus lose in efficiency.

On this point also I should like to ask the opinion of those present.

4. The numerical proportion of *staff* to work done appears to vary very much. I have heard it stated by experts that for hospital work 1 per 1,000, reckoning all round, should be suffi-

cient. In my own laundry, which is well equipped with modern machinery, but which is, unfortunately, too much cut by division walls for easy supervision, we find 22 hands per 20,000 a comfortable number.

From Mr. Helby's evidence before the Departmental Committee, recently published in a Blue Book, I see the Brook Fever Hospital employs a staff of 25 for 20,000, whereas Dr. Mackintosh quotes 19 as sufficient for 20,000 articles in his chapter on the laundry in his recent book on hospital construction; he does not, however, say whether the cleaning of the machinery, floors, etc., is to be done by the laundry or engineering and scrubbing staff, which, of course, makes a considerable difference.

Hospital laundry finance is not an easy subject, the figures being very complicated and difficult to rightly estimate. One may, indeed, readily calculate the actual stores consumed, and the water and light may be registered by meters for the laundry only, but very frequently the boilers which generate the steam are at the same time providing for other parts of the institution, and the amount of coal which can be fairly charged for laundry purposes is a difficult matter, as are also the services of the engineering staff, who are in charge of the machinery throughout the building.

In the Blue Book, however, from which I have already quoted, are certain most interesting figures, giving the actual cost incurred in a commercial undertaking—viz., £40 4s. 9d. per 1,000 articles. This includes horsekeep, rents, rates, etc. The same book contains tables showing, as far as possible, the cost per 1,000 articles washed in the laundries of the different institutions under the M.A.B. They differ very widely; thus, at the Fountain Hospital the price per 1,000 is quoted as £79 0s. 9d., and at the Northern £39 7s. 2d. Materials used differ as widely. In a commercial laundry we find used per 1,000 articles: Soap, 1lb.; soap powder, 3 lb.; soda, 10½ lb. The Western Hospital figures for soda alone stand at 57.6 lbs., and those of the South-Western at 26 lb. per 1,000.

Doubtless there is some explanation for the great difference; the use of soft and condensed water, for instance, or the proportion of flannel goods treated; but such very different returns from institutions under the same Board may well make one pause, and it is not surprising that such an institution as St. Thomas's Hospital finds it cheaper and better to contract with a trade laundry for the whole of its washing, and that several laundry experts advise large central laundries both for the M.A.B. and the Infirmaries under the Poor Law.

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