

the Resident Medical Officer. The Nurses for their part cast about to find a grievance against their Matrons, which they formerly would never have thought of; but they hear so much of "long hours," "poor fare," and "sweating," that they feel it their duty to be discontented, without any knowledge of relative facts. They lose the spirit of unquestioning obedience, and the happiness of work is thereby spoilt.

Hospital Committees are unwieldy bodies at all times. The majority of a Metropolitan Hospital Committee is, as a rule, lazy, leaving the real management in the hands of a few of the senior or more energetic members. Should they have economy as their fetish, and the Matron be able to show small expense or good income from her Private Nursing Staff, she will rule supreme and be spared many difficulties. Though all Committees have lines of similarity, undoubtedly the Provincial Hospital Committee has distinct peculiarity, which mark it as a genus apart. In London, ladies interested in the work have their energy directed into useful channels such as the Samaritan Society, &c., but in the provinces the Ladies' Committee is rampant. If the Matron can succeed in making her judgment weigh with the Gentlemen's Committee, her tact must be strained to the utmost in her dealing with the Ladies' Committee. The elements of which it is composed are very apt to be conflicting. The Lady President is usually a lady chosen to fill the chair because of her wealth and position, and she knows what is expected of her, and justifies her existence in office by being as pleasant to everyone as she can.

Then there is the lady who is on nearly every Committee in the town: "Such a practical person, you know." Very jealous of the proper business forms being carried through; very anxious to have everything printed, rules for everybody and "all nicely printed." She has a certain social position, is on visiting terms with the Lady President, and chats easily with her about their mutual acquaintance, to the chagrin of poor Mrs. X., who represents the shop and dissenting interest of the place, and who felt she had achieved a social success when she got her name on the list that Lady Mary heads. She is, however, equal to the occasion, supported by the consciousness that her bonnet is from Paris direct, and there is some doubt about Mrs. A.'s having come even from London, so she has her chat with Mrs. Y., whose husband is a power on the Gentlemen's Committee, and who finds his wife can get at useful information for him. This is sometimes useful to the Matron, who knows that remarks she makes will be repeated to Mr. Y., but it is awkward for her if she does *not* know!

Besides these we find the young married lady who would like to be a power, but who at present can only be obstructive. She always finds an objection to what other people propose, unless indeed she hopes for a card of invitation to the Lady President's next ball or garden party; then she upholds her view, whatever that may be.

Then we are sometimes inflicted with what one might fitly call an "innovatory lady." She has a genius for combination, and is always inventing some new "little plan," that she is sure will be "so nice," but just as likely as not to cost work and money, and be a perfectly unnecessary innovation.

And these form the party brought to the aid of the General Committee to check the autocratic tendencies of the Lady Superintendent. They are requested to see that the Nurses be not overworked; that they be well fed; that arrangements be made to make them take the fresh air, &c. There is no perception of the fact that the Matron who did not do so without their dictation was devoid of the first principle for maintaining an efficient Hospital Nursing Staff, and if she was a person to whom the welfare of her Nurses could not be entrusted, it is probable that she would be quite capable of preventing the management from having any idea whether or not their wishes were carried out. Possibly by their interference the *esprit de corps* of the Nurses may be broken, and strained relations introduced between the Lady Superintendent and her Nurses, as well as between her and the ladies who are, no doubt, sincere in their desire to help the Hospital.

It is true that in all community work a balance of power must be preserved; but to bring in a Ladies' Committee to attempt to control the Superintendent and her Nursing Staff can never achieve the desired result.

I am quite prepared to allow that a Committee, as a Committee, is very helpless. They have no idea of the working details of the Institution they undertake to manage. Everyone must be who has not lived in a Hospital, and therefore they are entirely at the mercy of whoever has to carry out that practical working—*i.e.*, the Matron. They may hamper her in many ways, strangle her interest and spontaneity with red-tape, but they cannot, without her co-operation, get below the surface work, where, if there is a grievance, the root lies.

How, then, is the balance of power to be maintained? The question is to be answered, I think, from two sides: (1) By the Committee, who are responsible to the public; (2) By the Nursing Staff, with the Matron at their head.

Let the Committee, when they have made selection of a suitable Superintendent, trust her,

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