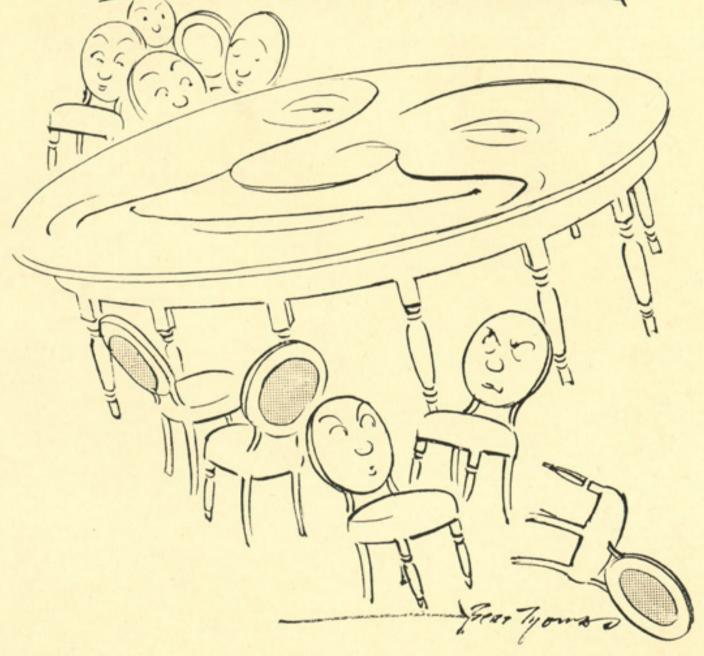
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Confessions and Recollection by a Committee Room Table

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CONFESSIONS AND RECOLLECTIONS

BY A COMMITTEE ROOM TABLE

Christmas, 1933.

" MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVE ON HOSPITAL COMMITTEES ARE VERY LIKE OTHER FOLK."

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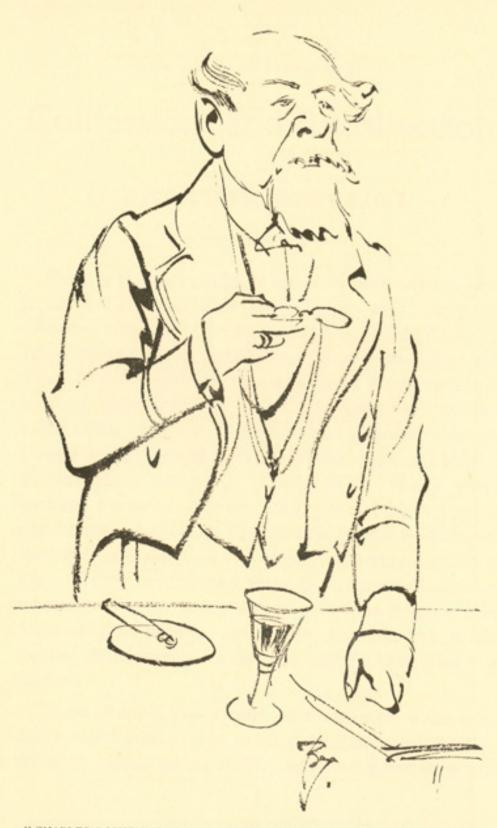
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"CHARLES DICKENS TOOK A PROMINENT PART IN THE PROCEEDINGS."

(page 7)

"The Privilege of Power is to Protect."

1-10100

Confessions and Recollections

BY

A COMMITTEE ROOM TABLE.

These few pages might never have been written were it not for the fact that, early in the year, 1933, our House Committee at the Royal Hospital & Home for Incurables, Putney, decided to discard me. You see, I am an old-fashioned oblong table at which twelve or fourteen persons can sit, and my successor is a modern oval table, and one that enables members of the Committee to sit within rather better sight and hearing of the whole company. Certainly for thirty years, perhaps for forty, or even fifty, years I have been in regular use—a table, in French at any rate, is feminine; therefore, we won't go too closely into the question of age. Every Wednesday there is a House Committee meeting, and on many other occasions I have been constantly in service. In future, I am to live in the nurses' sitting-room. I may be said to have died "in harness."

There must, if you please, be a measure of innocent make-belief about these small confessions and recollections of mine, for no table, however handsome and polished, is supposed to be able to take up a pen and write. Only the fairies of our childhood days credit a table with possessing a vocabulary.

With the permission of the indulgent reader, I will try and recall a little of what I have seen or heard, or, possibly, imagined, during my long term of office. There will be no attempt to put matters in date order, or to say anything that is too spicy, or that is likely to hurt anybody's feelings—although I know heaps of human secrets! I shall just jot things down as they occur to me, only seeking to jog pleasantly the memory of dear old friends, and to entertain mildly younger or coming friends. Table legs are accustomed to violent kicks, though I shall do my best to avoid saying anything that will deserve censure or active punishment.

My confessions and recollections will not, of course, only refer to what has taken place at House Committee meetings; often enough, in this room in which I stand there are informal talks on outside matters, from which I learn a good deal. Then, from time to time, officials and callers at the Hospital meet here and have a chat on subjects which are not always discussed at formal meetings. Sometimes visiting clergymen will seek a quiet interview in this room with one of the patients or with one of the members of the nursing or domestic staff.

The thousands of discussions heard by a committee table do not make really deep impressions; arguments,



" MRS, KENDAL PAID A VISIT."

when they reach boiling-point, are more entertaining. What one is always on the look-out for is new thoughts! Men and women who serve on hospital committees are very like the men and women who attend church, or who go to concerts, or who are to be met with in any other assembly of fellow-creatures, excepting, of course, excitable political gatherings!

1-10105

The pictures on the walls of this room are evidence of the fact that, ever since the first years of this Charity's existence, this huge organisation has been tenderly guided and guarded by men and women whose first consideration was the welfare of the afflicted residents here. The large oil painting of Dr. Andrew Reed, our pious founder, and the portrait of Earl Cave of Richmond, a president of recent years, that look down from these walls, are proof of the belief that good causes attract good men. And here an odd idea comes to me-will there ever hang on the walls of this room a painting (or a photograph) of the old-fashioned oblong table that served the committee so long and so faithfully? I trow not! The very notion of perpetuating the memory of a mere inanimate oak table is too grotesque.

The wonderful work of the Royal Hospital & Home for Incurables, Putney, always seems to have had special appeal to men of warm imagination. Charles Dickens took a prominent and valuable part in the proceedings when this Home was instituted, at the

Mansion House, London, in the year 1854. Another well-remembered name is that of George Meredith, who passed onward in the year 1909; there was a letter of his once discussed in this room. George Meredith wrote, not long before his widely-lamented death:—

1-10/05

"The appeal for subscriptions to the Royal Hospital for Incurables, Putney Heath, should strike to the heart of all who have the common humane feeling for their fellows. For here is the case of utter helplessness under an impending inevitable doom. These poor sufferers have passed hope and still they draw our breath of life. Their position has only to be brought home to the general mind for subscriptions to flow, if we would be worthy of our good repute for charity."

Other names of well-known writers who have helped this National Charity by their pen and gifts are the Rev. S. Baring-Gould, Mr. Harold Begbie, Mr. E. F. Benson, Sir Francis C. Burnand, Miss Rosa N. Carey, Sir W. S. Gilbert, Madame Sarah Grand, Mr. Thomas Hardy, Sir H. Rider Haggard, Mr. E. V. Lucas, Mr. Justin McCarthy, Sir Gilbert Parker, Mr. Eden Phillpotts, Mr. Walter Reymond, Sir Owen Seaman, Bt., Mr. and Mrs. Clement Shorter, and Dr. Welldon, until recently Dean of Durham.

The Charles Dickens family have had long and affectionate association with this place. For years, the



"DURING THE WAR THERE WAS A VERY HEATED DISCUSSION IN THIS ROOM."

(page 11)

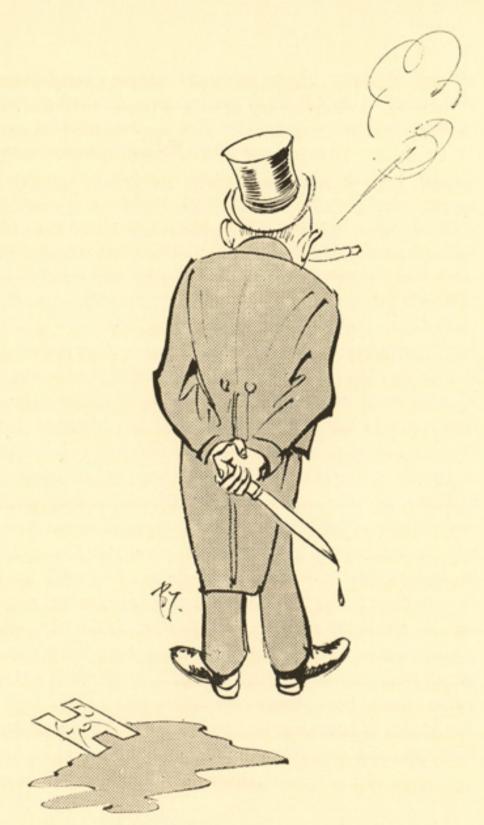
grandchildren of the great novelist were regular visitors, and gave spritely entertainments in the Assembly Room.

There are not many Hospitals and Homes where visitors are received daily throughout the year, but here such a practice is in force. Two rare visitors, in Mr. C. Dawson and Mr. W. J. Peall, attended several times, and gave exhibition games of billiards for the edification, or, should I say, for the education, of our male patients. C. Dawson and W. J. Peall were really world-famous billiard players, and photographs of these distinguished visitors, playing at Putney, appeared in many newspapers. Our billiard table, by the way, was a gift to us from the Duchess of Northumberland.

Another welcome visitor, years ago, was the then Bishop of Chichester, who once, when in this room, was so struck by the remarkable excellence of some of the needlework done by the in-patients, in spite of their crippled and afflicted condition, that he offered a prize for the best specimen worked for the Annual Sale of Work. When it was pointed out to the Bishop that the greater the weakness of the invalid, the poorer, perhaps, was her needlework, while the best effort can always be disposed of, and is not, therefore, in so much need of a prize, his Lordship smilingly agreed, and gave a special donation to the Sale of Work Fund, so that everybody concerned should benefit.

Mrs. Kendal, now Dame Madge Kendal, once entered this room, and sat at my side for a time. I recollect her saying, about long life: "Keeping cheerful does it. "I cultivate the acquaintance of young people because "they keep me cheered up, and, then, by being cheerful "myself, I am sure I make it easier for the nurses "who look after me." Mrs. Kendal subsequently paid a visit to the Assembly Room, and, from the platform there, she addressed the patients and visitors, and left behind her a fragrant memory.

A day that will never be forgotten by me was the one on which Miss Ellen Terry, later Dame Ellen Terry, deposited her umbrella and wraps here. Miss Terry entered this room as if she were a schoolgirl, and she exlaimed: "Oh, these dreadful photographers!"—for there were quite a score of them in the Entrance Hall, anxious to snap her. Miss Terry not only delighted a big audience in the Assembly Room by her recitations and her spontaneous talk, she made a tour of the Institution, and she bought, in the male patients' workroom, some "souvenirs," including a book-rest and a glove-box. For the benefit of my lady readers, I may say that Ellen Terry looked charming, in a light brown loose-fitting robe, and when Miss Rose, aged eighty-two years, who had been in the Hospital for fifty-one years, handed the great actress a bouquet of pink carnations, Miss Terry stooped down and tenderly and reverently kissed the aged lady. A few days after her visit, Miss Terry wrote a beautiful letter, read in



" HE MURDERS THE POOR LITTLE LETTER 'H'."

my hearing, saying that she would never forget her visit to Putney, and sending to all the patients her love and best wishes. I still recall her irresistible charm; her voice was full of caresses.

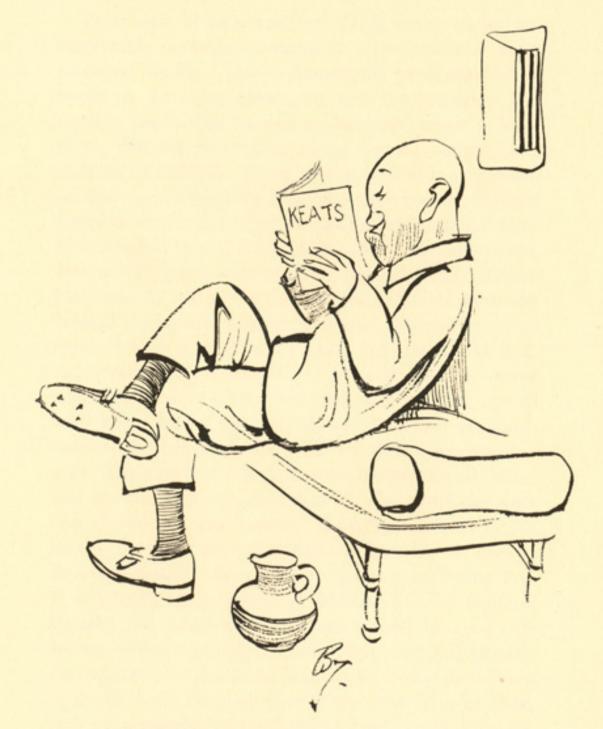
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During the Great War, there was a very heated discussion in this room. At the time, it was almost impossible to get young and strong men as male attendants and porters, and our Institution had to fall back upon the services of Belgian refugees and Conscientious Objectors, who were sent to us by the War Office, or some other responsible public authority. One day, at a well-attended meeting, a member of the House Committee remarked that he would not have a Conscientious Objector on the premises, if he were in sole control. At this, another member of the Committee declared that, as matter of considered fact, it required more real strength of character to be a Conscientious Objector than it did to enlist as a soldier and serve in France, such was the contempt and violent abuse poured upon Conscientious Objectors at the time. The two usually-calm gentlemen who argued on this subject became quite unduly hot and excited. It was, of course, well-nigh impossible to carry on the many-sided work of the Hospital without male servants, as, in those days, large quantities of coal had to be taken up to the sixty-two wards, and many other duties, which only men were accustomed to discharge, had to be carried on daily. To-day, we have gas-fires or radiators in all the wards.

Years ago, at one meeting in this room, on an unforgettable occasion, everybody experienced a most profound shock. House Committee proceedings had begun in the usual quiet way, and the Secretary was reading the rather hum-drum minutes, when Colonel A. G. Holland (a brother of the famous Canon Scott Holland) hurried in. No sooner had the dear gentleman sat down and signed the attendance book, than, without a sign of warning, he dropped like a log from his chair. It was found that the Colonel's earthly life had ceased. Two medical men were at hand, but nothing to restore life could be done. It was ascertained later from the Colonel's personal medical man that he had for years suffered from a weak heart, which information he had, characteristically, concealed from even his most intimate friends. The deceased was beloved by all who knew him; he was always the soul of goodnature, and his unselfishness in all affairs was remarkable. The blinds of this room were quietly drawn down, and the meeting was abandoned. Not until the next day, however, was Colonel Holland's sudden death known to the patients, from whom it is always desirable to hide news of too startling or tragic a nature. It is interesting to note that the late Colonel Holland entered the Army in 1869, and retired in 1902; he served during the Afghan Campaign, and was present during the occupation of Kandahar, being mentioned in dispatches. He took part in the Boer War of 1881, and was a member of the Sudan Expedition of 1884-85,

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"STRANGE CRAFT OF WORDS—STRANGE MAGIC OF THE PEN WHEREBY THE DEAD STILL TALK WITH LIVING MEN."

(page 14)



" A PARCEL BEARING A VERY STRIKING LABEL."
(page 15)

receiving the medal with clasp and the bronze star. With the Imperial Yeomanry he saw further service during the South African War, and was given the Queen's medal with three clasps.

Mention of that sober-minded individual, the Secretary, reminds me that he sometimes provokes new and uninitiated members of the Committee by his weird mispronouncements when reading aloud out-of-the-way words or obscure medical terms. One day (wearing his old school tie) he was struggling impatiently with "disseminated sclerosis," when an academic and kindly member put him right. Judge of the Committeeman's utter disappointment when, a week or two later, the same unfortunate mispronouncement occurred. "I have a blind spot in my mind for "words I do not use regularly; besides, my sense "of utility in these matters has not yet been "aroused," said the Secretary. By the way, it is remarked of a certain Cabinet Minister of the present day that he murders the poor little letter "h," causing much fussy comment, but that, at the bridge-table or during an informal debate on the Irish Question in the smoking-room of the House, nobody ventures to suggest to him what should be done, or how any letter or word should be pronounced; he is then king of the castle. What a box of tricks is the human brain. Some of us may agree that it is not necessary to waste much thought or time upon very ugly words,

when there are so many that are exquisite. Who remembers Richard Le Gallienne's lines :-

- "Strange craft of words, strange magic of the pen,
- "Whereby the dead still talk with living men.
- "Whereby a sentence, in its trivial scope,
- " May centre all we love, and all we hope.
- "And in a couplet, like a rosebud furled,
- "Lies all the wistful wonder of the world."

This room had several visits from Archdeacon Sinclair, whose memory is still cherished by some residents in this big building. The Archdeacon preached a sermon in our Assembly Room, and these were his fine and touching opening words:-

"It is a great privilege and satisfaction to me "to visit the Royal Hospital & Home for "Incurables, Putney, and offer to the patients "some few words of comfort, encouragement, and "help. Often I have heard of this magnificent "Home and Hospital for incurable persons, and "often I have wished to see it, with its 250 " patients, and, what is, perhaps, equally important "its 650 absent Pensioners. I think to-day of the "Pensioners in their own modest homes, all over "the United Kingdom, who are dependent largely "on the sweet charity and sympathy of this " great and noble Institution. I think, also, of the "really vast sum of money that is necessary to "keep this National Charity going-£50,000 a " year-and I ask God to put it into the hearts



"REGARDING ALL THE WORLD AS ITS FRIEND."

" of all his faithful servants to support this truly "Christian place."

Every year, with unfailing regularity, a parcel bearing a very striking label is opened in this room. The Matron and others seem to know by instinct from whom the parcel has come, before it is opened, and they are always right, for it is the Queen of the British Empire who has performed a very queenly action, which should give a fillip to the Annual Sale of Work-work done by residents of this Home, as a means of providing themselves with pocket-money for little extra personal comforts. Queen Mary has sent gifts of brocade, silk, velvet, etc., with the graciously expressed hope that the material may be useful in making bags, cushions, and other things, for the Annual Bazaar. Her Majesty's gift is evidence of her practical turn of mind, as well as her kindly thought for the patients. One can imagine with what pleasure the poor, maimed fingers will work upon the beautiful stuffs sent to them by the foremost lady in the land. It goes without saying that the articles into which the Queen's gifts are fashioned find a very ready sale.

Sometimes this room is filled with the beautiful perfume of wild flowers. I am all attention, and listen eagerly when a hamper is opened, and I was happy to learn that the Queen had sent a basket of primroses with her "best wishes to the patients of the Royal Hospital & Home for Incurables, Putney."

The House Committee Room is, of course, devoted mainly to House administrative work; yet, there are occasions when other affairs hold sway. I overheard a conversation once between a lady visitor and the Matron, which opened my eyes to the loving thought which many of our friends and supporters evince on behalf of the afflicted residents here. The visitor had brought a large box, in which were drilled a number of little round holes. Afterwards, I heard how various are the alleviations of which the patients here avail themselves; alleviations, sometimes, of a nature unsuspected by the outside public, upon whose beneficence the major comforts of their lot depends. In this connection, readers will be interested to know that pet birds are kept at a few of the bedsides in the wards, for the interest and entertainment of those no less unwilling prisoners of incurable disease. Canaries, bull-finches, and love-birds, enliven the monotony of many dull and painstricken hours. Among these birds there was a canary, the recent loss of which was mourned by all who were acquainted with its remarkable intelligence and its many amusing and attractive qualities. For years, it was regularly set free in a large ward, where it would fly about in perfect confidence,

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Occasionally, arrangements are made here within these four walls for entertainments. A unique performance was given at the King's Hall, of Drama from the

regarding all the world as its friend.



"IT IS SOMETIMES DECLARED THAT MEDALS ARE BECOMING TOO COMMON."

Book of Job. Princess Christian and Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, arrived early at the Hall, and were received by Lady Loch, who organised this wonderful presentation. The staging was not the least remarkable part, the rich purple draperies and deep greys harmonising well with the varied and brilliant costumes of those taking part. It was the general opinion of the large audience on its conclusion that the only pity was the performance could not be seen oftener, and in every town and city of the country. The music and singing were beyond praise. The proceeds of this enterprise were sent to this National Charity.

There was an interesting argument the other day at one of the meetings, when a suggestion was made that the practice be adopted of awarding long-service medals to the members of the nursing staff. The cost of the bronze and silver medals would not, in any case, be serious, and the steady increase in the number of medals struck would be gratifying evidence of the happy relations existing between the working staff, the nursing staff, the officials, and the patients. It is sometimes declared that medals are becoming so common that no one values them. I lean to the opinion that medals are received with pleasure, as tangible tokens of mutual satisfaction.

Not often are any of the patients themselves seen in this room, though, now and then, one or two will come for an interview, at the request of the Committee. This only arises when there are little difficulties, irregularities, or misunderstandings to adjust, or when a patient has some exceptional subject to ventilate. Among the patients who have visited this room was a Mr. Fred Winter, who had been here for many years, and whose death was deplored by his fellow-patients and by all with whom he came in contact. Mr. Winter claimed to be the author of the words of the popular song, "The Rosary." He was always busy with his typewriter, and he made many known and unknown friends by his writings.

1-10105

Our Chairman, at one meeting, amused his colleagues by reading aloud something from a publication he had bought at one of W. H. Smith's bookstalls. The subject of the printed matter was "The Length Of Appeals." Our Chairman read out: "One of the most successful "and curious commercial discoveries of recent times "was that made by a patent-medicine millionaire, "who used to write his own advertisements. He is "said to have discovered that an'advertisement could "hardly be too long! He made it plain that the "successful quack is he who wraps the consultation "reports round the bottle in several closely-printed "sheets. 'Advertising,' said the writer, 'is a form of " 'appeal writing, and this desire to read about things, "' when coupled with quotations, responds to some "' ineradicable desire of human nature.' Nevertheless, "as we all know, neither length nor quotation-making "is sufficient to ensure a good appeal. Examples of



"NEITHER LENGTH NOR QUOTATION-MAKING IS ENOUGH TO MAKE A GOOD APPEAL."

"the art are the pamphlets issued year by year from the Royal Hospital & Home for Incurables, Putney. "We have had to praise them so often."

When strangers enter this room and ask to see the Matron, it is usually because they have some special topic that they wish to discuss. A certain Duchess sat here and had a long chat with the Matron, not long ago: the subject of the talk was "The Four Dread-"noughts." I gathered from what was said that there are four ladies among the patients here who sit out on one of the verandahs, in their wheeled chairs, during all weathers. Their sufferings do not vanish entirely in the open air, but they are less severe. The other patients have named their four courageous sisters "The Four Dreadnoughts," and this nick-name has been received with nods and smiles.

Lord Curzon of Kedleston came to see us once. Standing here and speaking to an official, I recollect he said: "I take it that your Incurables are those "upon whom sentence of death has been passed: "and yet they have committed no offence to earn that "sentence; no judicial tribunal has sat in judgment "upon them. Fate only has stricken them down: "it is the physician or the surgeon who has signed "their death-warrant. Even when criminals are "condemned to death an effort is made to lend some "solace to the short hours that separate them from "their doom. What we do for the guilty shall we not "much more attempt for the innocent? The days

"between the sentence and the execution may be few or many. Often they will be days of pain and suffering, always of helpless waiting, sometimes of hopeless regrets. Shall we not do all that lies in our power to lighten the trial and to brighten the gloom? "We cannot remit the sentence, but we can cheer the suspense."

Then, when Princess Christian was President of our Ladies' Association, she would enter this room and draft a letter, which was always the subject of loyal and grateful interest to the members of the House Committee. One of the letters written during the Great War by Her Royal Highness ran:—

"While the first claim of the generosity of the "public belongs by right to those who have "sacrificed so much for their country, it must "never be forgotten that another large class of "sufferers exists to whom no help comes by right, "for whose heroism no V.C.'s are given, and for "whom the future seems unrelieved darkness "illumined by no ray of glory or patriotism. These "are the incurable cases for whom the Royal "Hospital & Home for Incurables, Putney, affords "refuge and support. There will, it is feared, be "a large increase in their numbers, owing to the "effects of the war. Of these cases, the most "entirely unbefriended are helped by the Ladies' "Association of the Hospital, which, year after "year, rescues a few of them from complete



" THOSE WITH BRAINS AND THOSE WITH MONEY."

"despair. I appeal on their behalf for the financial means to carry on this most urgently necessary work."

And now, I fear, I am rapidly filling up my strictly allotted space, without telling one-hundredth part of what I set out to say. A Committee Room table is, I grant, a privileged object, and I could fill thousands of pages with my confessions and recollections. I realize that I have not referred to many events that will be recalled by scores of life-long supporters. But it is fairer not to give only half-tales; obviously, there is not room for everything. Yet, before I close, it will be expected of me to write a line or two concerning the different men and women who serve on the House Committee.

It has been said, by someone who is still living, that, classed brutally, only two types of individual are of great use on a hospital committee; those with brains and those with money. This classification is altogether too uncouth in its directness, and, further, it by no means conveys all that is necessary on the part of those who would serve. Still, there is an element of truth in the unmannerly classification, for it implies, though much too bluntly, that only men and women of undoubted mental capacity are likely to be of great service, unless those with ample means—who are likely to give liberally—are also elected.

Taking London alone, millions of people see daily the outside of the large hospitals which are scattered about the metropolis and its suburbs. It would be safe to say that only hundreds among those millions have any inner knowledge of the actual work that is necessary on the part of the governing body.

No doubt some persons suppose that a hospital committee is composed of men who have to draw up certain rules and regulations for the carrying on of the particular branch of philanthropic work in which a hospital is engaged. There must, they conclude, be somebody to see that the windows are cleaned, the beds made, the rates and taxes paid, the coal and food ordered and delivered.

Possibly, not more than one person in fifty has any accurate idea of the range of the ramifications and the extreme vigilance entailed in the efficient management of a big voluntary institution.

I daresay the table at the City Offices, Bond Court House, Walbrook, London, E.C.4, could write much more interesting matter than I have provided, for it is in the City that the General Board meets, as well as the Finance Committee. The Board, of course, is the head responsible body that is accountable to the public for the policy and general direction of the Royal Hospital & Home for Incurables. The Finance Committee deals with the immense task of raising at least £50,000 a year from voluntary sources for the upkeep of this Home-on-the-Hill—and of spending it! No State aid comes to this National Charity. At times, the outlook is dark, though, year by year passes, and the great and noble work goes on and on.



"SOMEBODY TO SEE THAT THE WINDOWS ARE CLEANED."

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION.

An Annual Subscriber has One Vote at each Election for each Half Guinea, and an additional Vote for every additional Half Guinea. A Donation entitles to votes at the next ensuing Election, four votes being given for each Guinea contributed. A Life Subscriber has One Vote for Life for Five Guineas, and an additional Vote for Life for every additional Five Guineas.

Subscriptions received at the Office, Bond Court House, Walbrook, E.C.4, by the Secretary, to whom all Orders should be made payable; by the Treasurer, and by Messrs. GLYN, MILLS & Co., 42, Gracechurch Street, E.C.3.

It may surprise some readers to learn that the Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables, Putney, is denied a share in the annual distribution from the King Edward's Hospital Fund and the Saturday and Sunday Collections for the Hospitals. Not one penny from these funds ever finds its way to this Charity. The main reason for this is that the Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables, Putney, does not cure patients, a task which it would naturally not pretend to undertake, since it only accepts cases which have already been discharged as incurable by other hospitals, or certified as incurable by two doctors. Surely, the fact that this hospital is denied a share in the distribution of these Funds lends added claim upon the generosity of the public?

The Hospital is not quite a mile from East Putney Railway Station (District Railway), where cabs are obtainable. Putney Station (Southern Railway) is rather more than a mile distant. Motor omnibuses (Services Nos. 93 and 85B) run from Putney Bridge Station (District Railway) to the top of Putney Hill which is within three minutes' walk of the Hospital.

FORM OF BEQUEST.

Incurables Putney, the sum of £, free of duty, to be paid, together with the duty thereon, out of such part of my estate as can be lawfully bequeathed for charitable purposes, and to be applicable to the general purposes of such Institution, and I declare that the receipt of the Treasurer or other proper officer for the time being of such Institution shall be a sufficient discharge for the same.

N.B.—By virtue of the "Mortmain and Charitable Uses Act, 1891," land may now be devised to a Charity, but it is liable to be sold within one year from the death of the Testator.

BANKERS' ORDER

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Home for Incurables, Putney, at Please pay now and annually to the A/c of Mills & Co., the Royal Hospital and of

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CHRISTMAS, 1933.

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CHRISTMAS, 1933. CHEQUES TO BE CROSSED "Massys. GLYN, MILLS & CO."	AN ANNUAL SUBSCRIBER has one Vote at each Election for each Half-Guinea. A DONATION entitles to Votes at the next ensuing Election, Four Votes being given for each Guinea contributed. A LIFE SUBSCRIBER has One Vote for Life for Five Guineas, and an additional Vote for Life for every additional Five Guineas. * Please verite name as it should be printed in the List of Governors and Donors. † Kindly strike out the words not applicable.	ROYAL HOSPITAL AND HOME FOR INCURABLES, PUTNEY. (Signed)	which send you ast a Donation in aid of the funds of the	Enclosed you will find a an Annual Subscription for £	Sir, Address	From*	ROYAL HOSPITAL AND HOME FOR INCURABLES, PUTNEY, BOND COURT HOUSE, WALBROOK, E.C.4.	To SIR HENRY LOPES, Br., Treasurer. Date	Remittance Form.

