

wrote to the Matron, Miss Lewis, declining to pay and stating that the nurse had disgraced herself by her conduct. This was the libel complained of. The defence was that the letter was privileged, and that it was not of the libellous character alleged. It was written in good faith and without any malicious intent. The hearing occupied two days, and in the end the jury was unable to agree and was discharged.

The interest of the case centres on the point that, acting on the instructions of the doctor who gave evidence that the patient was suffering from mental aberration, and required to be kept from worry, the nurse opened Mrs. Thompson's letters. In her evidence Miss Davies stated she did this in the presence of the patient, and never without consulting her. She denied that she had told the governess the contents of a letter from the defendant to her husband, and that the defendant had had delirium tremens. If these suggestions were true her conduct would be disgraceful.

Miss Lewis, Matron of the Nursing Home, stated in her evidence that she had refused to give the plaintiff more work unless she cleared her character.

The Superintendent of a Nursing Home has a duty to perform to the public, which no doubt induced Miss Lewis to take this course. On the other hand, if the assertions of the patient cannot be substantiated the nurse has suffered considerable professional damage, and is entitled to compensation. We hope the case will be re-tried. The position of affairs at present is satisfactory to no one.

### Nursing at the New Somerset Hospital.

The appointment of Miss Lowrie to the Matronship of the New Somerset Hospital, Cape Town, is, we learn, of a temporary, not a permanent character. She was waiting in Cape Town, at the time that the hospital was in difficulties, for the rebuilding of the hospital in Swaziland, of which she is Matron, which had been burnt in the war, and came to the rescue *pro tem*. A correspondent writes: "It showed a fine spirit in her to come to the aid of her old hospital, and do the dirty work, prepared to retire (I should have said, resolved to retire) as soon as a Matron was appointed. She has not had an easy time, as you may imagine. She will leave the place in a comparatively settled state."

We are glad to learn that our comments on the behaviour of those nurses who appeared at the fancy dress ball at the New Somerset Hospital, Cape Town, in men's costume are fully endorsed by Sisters in that institution. We learn also with pleasure that not one of these nurses was English-trained, and only one English-born.

### Practical Points.

#### A New Method of Sharpening Knives.

The *Engineer* states that a German experimenter named Bernhard has discovered that aluminium may be used for putting an edge on fine-cutting instruments such as surgical knives or razors, and that it acts exactly like a razor-hone of the best quality. He found that when steel was rubbed on it the aluminium disintegrated with the formation of a powder of a somewhat greasy nature which clung to the steel with great tenacity and assisted in cutting away the hard surface of the metal.

#### Hands and Hair-Dressing.

Dr. Anita M'Gee, in her "Talks with Young Nurses" in the *Trained Nurse*, says:—"One of the subjects that nurses might be taught is that of

hair-dressing, and therefore I offer a few suggestions which may be found useful. A most comfortable method of dressing the hair is to part it down the centre from the forehead to the nape of the neck; comb each half to a point above the ear and near the part, and then braid it. The patient can then lie in any position without having her hair under her and each half can be brushed and braided independently of the other and without causing any discomfort. In brushing, always begin at the ends, and as the knots disappear take out those higher up by slowly increasing the length of the stroke. The common practice is to reverse this and to make a snarl at once by combing the tangle near the roots of the hair all into a bunch. This is just as though you took a tangled skein and, instead of gently drawing the threads apart, you begin by pulling them tighter together; so, to avoid pulling out the looser hairs, avoid combing one knot close to another. If an obstinate knot is encountered, drop the brush and loosen it gently with the fingers. When one is learning to ride a horse, the good riding-master explains the need of gaining "light hands," and just as you convey impressions to the horse through your touch on the reins, so you convey nervous impressions to your patient through your touch on her hair. Therefore the cultivation of a light, gentle touch is of great utility. I have often thought that the ideal hairdresser was born, not made, but in this, as in most other handicrafts, persevering and thoughtful effort will achieve much." Those who have suffered many things at the hands of many persons in the matter of hairdressing and brushing will be aware of the necessity for this advice.

#### Danger in Watercress.

The Public Health Committee of Hackney state in a report that as a result of investigations made by their medical officer it was proved that a recent outbreak of enteric fever in the district had been caused by the consumption of sewer-polluted watercress, and that a large portion of the watercress supplied to the metropolis is sewage-polluted. The Committee recommend that the Metropolitan Borough Councils and the London County Council should ask the Local Government Board to hold an inquiry as to the sources of watercress supply. This recommendation has been adopted.

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