

We are glad to learn that the system of obtaining the written consent of parents or guardians before the performance of necessary operations on children, which has on several occasions been advocated in this Journal, is now to be adopted by a large London hospital. Both for the protection of the patient, and for that of the hospital should such consent be afterwards questioned, this course is undoubtedly the right one.

Poor Law Reform.

Speaking of Poor Law Reform at the annual meeting of the East Fife Liberal Association at Ladybank last Saturday, Mr. Haldane dealt with the question with the thoroughness and sympathy which we have learnt to expect from the Secretary of State for War. He said that the Old Age Pensions Act only dealt with part of a much larger reform which lay in front of the Liberal Party.

The Poor Law system established years ago was not enough for what they had to deal with to-day. They had to deal with the prevention of diseases among the poor, not merely in the interest of the individual but in the interest of the State; they had to deal with the children; and with those who tramped the streets not merely from misfortune but from their own fault; and they had to deal with the class who tramped the streets because they could not get bread or work. It was necessary to differentiate between these. One set of authorities should deal with the children, another with preventable diseases among the poor, and another with that almost criminal element which required to be segregated because it dragged down others. An element which should be dealt with tenderly and kindly consisted of those who sought the shelter of the poorhouse through no fault of their own. There was again that class which ought not to go near the poorhouses and ought not to be stigmatised as paupers in their old age, and which had never been able to save, and that was the distinct class which made a claim on the community for consideration in the way of a pension.

The Tuberculosis Congress.

At the inaugural meeting of the Sixth International Congress on Tuberculosis, held in Washington, Dr. Newsholme, who replied on behalf of Great Britain to the welcome extended by Mr. Cortelyou, the president of the meeting, who acted as the personal representative of President Roosevelt, to the foreign delegates made an important announcement on behalf of Mr. John Burns, President of the Local Government Board. Dr. Newsholme stated that the L.G.B. has decided to issue an order compelling all Poor Law medical officers to notify any sanitary authorities making application for such a notification of all cases of phthisis occurring amongst parochial patients. A result of this would be that it would be obligatory on other Poor Law officials to notify changes of addresses of Poor Law patients suffering from this disease.

Legal Matters.

ILL-TREATING AN EPILEPTIC CHILD.

At the Bournemouth Police Court on Friday, Miss Mabel Scott, who was described as a certificated nurse, and the Lady Superintendent of a Home for Invalid Children at Jesmond Firs, Alum Chine, was charged by the R.S.P.C.C. with having cruelly beaten, ill-treated, and neglected an imbecile boy of twelve, subject to epileptic fits, between April 1st and September 19th, placed in her charge by the Christchurch Guardians.

The prosecution stated that the circular issued in regard to the Home set out that it was intended for "delicate children who required skilled nursing and careful attention." There was a suggestion of a committee, but, as a matter of fact, there was no auxiliary control. On September 8th defendant was annoyed because the boy did not wear a pinafore. She ordered him to bed, but he, being stubborn, defendant took him up and dropped him on the floor, his head striking the ground. In his bedroom the lad upset some lotion, whereupon Miss Scott violently beat him about the legs, arms, and thighs with a slipper. The boy cried piteously, and a nurse expostulated with defendant about her ungovernable temper, and said her conduct towards the lad was most unjust. The boy's body was covered with bruises, and defendant attempted to justify her conduct by saying he had taken a half-sovereign.

Dr. Alexander regarded the punishment as "very severe," but admitted that a certain amount of corporal punishment was the only thing which appealed to that type of child.

Miss Scott's defence was the denial of the ill-treatment. She attributed the bruises to falls resulting from fits. The Bench, however, considered the charge proved, and fined the defendant 20s., but were not of opinion that she habitually ill-treated the children.

MRS. BYERS AGAIN.

Mrs. Jessie Byers, who two years ago was sentenced at the Central Criminal Court to twelve months' imprisonment for an infringement of the Cremation Act for having burnt the bodies of babies in her charge, was charged at Tottenham last week with unlawfully retaining for hire or reward more than one infant, apart from their parents, for longer than 48 hours. Miss E. A. Brown, Inspector under the Infant Life Protection Act, said she noticed an advertisement in a paper in 1907 offering a home to a child, the advertiser's name being Wilson. She afterwards found that Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Byers were the same person, and on visiting her house on September 19 found three children there. They were in good condition.

Mr. E. C. Brown said the defendant had been answering advertisements for the adoption of children for sums of £5.

The magistrate, in sentencing Mrs. Byers, said the case was a very bad one, and there were no extenuating circumstances, as she knew the law. He inflicted the maximum penalty of six months' hard labour.

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