

REFLECTIONS

FROM A BOARD ROOM MIRROR.

The members of the Council of the British Hospitals Association met at St. Bartholomew's Hospital last Saturday. Dr. D. J. Mackintosh, the chairman, presided, and there were present representatives of the voluntary hospitals both from London and the provinces.

Mr. Conrad Thies, the honorary secretary, presented a memorandum in reference to the returns received from a large number of voluntary hospitals throughout the United Kingdom, which showed that the numbers of insured persons at the present time receiving treatment in these institutions were as follows:—In-patients, from 24 to 80 per cent., averaging 49 per cent. Out-patients, from 18 to 72 per cent., averaging 47 per cent.

The Council then proceeded to consider the treatment of insured persons in the voluntary hospitals, and ultimately resolved to make the following recommendations to voluntary hospitals:—

"The British Hospitals' Association is strongly of opinion that upon the medical benefits under the Insurance Act coming into force insured persons should be examined by a medical officer, but except for accidents, emergencies, or such special treatment as can only be given in a hospital, they should no longer be received in the out-patients' or casualty departments, unless accompanied by a certificate or introduced personally by the medical practitioner who is in attendance. In such cases, after consultation, they should be referred back to their medical practitioner, with an expression of the opinion of the hospital physician or surgeon on the case. And a list of all such insured persons and the practitioners by whom they are sent should be forwarded to the Insurance Committee of the district periodically.

"With reference to in-patients, insured persons whose cases are urgent and in need of hospital treatment should be admitted as heretofore, and hospitals should keep accurate records of all such persons admitted, and, if possible, the approved society to which they belong."

LEGAL MATTERS.

A CHARGE OF THEFT.

Margaret Norwood and Bessie Gill, wearing nurses' uniform, and giving their address at a London Infirmary, were charged at Marlborough Street, before Mr. Mead, last week, with being concerned together with stealing and receiving a number of articles of the value of £10 4s. 10d., belonging to Messrs. Selfridge & Co., Oxford Street, W.

It was stated in evidence that when in the manager's office one of the accused admitted having taken goods, and the other made a similar admission to Detective Beresford. Gill also said there were articles in her wardrobe at the Infirmary which she had taken from Selfridge's, and which were found there.

The accused were committed for trial, the magistrate refusing bail.

THE TOOTING BABIES HOME.

The case of Mrs. F. Kinghorne, of 26, Dagmar Road, Camberwell, was concluded in the South-Western Court, on Saturday, the 21st ult. Mr. Marriott prosecuted for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children; Mr. Colam, K.C., defended. It will be remembered that Mrs. Kinghorne kept a home for babies at Tooting, several of whom had died.

The suggestion of the defence was that the drains of the house, rented from the London County Council, were seriously faulty, permitting the escape of sewer gas, and affecting the health of the children. As the home was licensed by the London County Council, it was visited by one of their inspectors, who stated that everything was done for the comfort of the children. Some prejudice had been introduced; and the defendant had been attacked for paying one of the nurses a salary of 10s. a week, and another 6s. What of that? asked Mr. Colam. The women were willing to work for these salaries.

Mr. Marriott said the defendant's neglect consisted of employing incompetent women; in not obtaining medical supervision; and in failing to secure a supply of coal. There was no proper nursing.

Mr. de Grey, the magistrate, said the case had caused him much anxiety. He did not think the home was properly conducted. But the case must be carried a step further. There must be wilful neglect. If the lady inspector did not see anything wrong there was an end to the case. The defendant acted imprudently in employing unqualified nurses and in dressing them up as professional ones. Under the circumstances he dismissed the summons, refusing an application for costs.

We have here much food for reflection, and a glimmer of hope. It is something quite new for Counsel to suggest that women employed to look after sick children shall be "competent," and hopeful for a magistrate to realise that it is even "imprudent" to employ unqualified persons as nurses and dress them up as "professional ones." We are getting on. Let us hope the Home Secretary will now be able to discern some connection between this "imprudence" (the poor babes are dead and buried in consequence) and the State Registration of competent nurses.

In our opinion the "imprudence" is nothing less than a cruel imposition, and if registration of nursing homes were in force it would be punished as such.

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