

## THE PUTNEY MYSTERY.

THIS case has come to an end, and retribution has most deservedly fallen upon three out of the four culprits concerned in the cruel business. It is most earnestly to be hoped that the fourth will be captured and dealt with, before long. But with all due deference to Mr. Justice Grantham, the case does *not* "illustrate the importance of maintaining our national system of burial," as against cremation; nor does the present system secure that protection for society which he appears to consider. This is only too evident from the fact that the Charlwoods, Francises, and Freemans, are not deterred apparently by any "knowledge" from carrying out their nefarious practices; and if the better sanitation of England shall one day demand cremation of the dead as a protection for the living, it will not be a very difficult task to put into force a far more efficient, simpler, and cheaper method of "protecting society," than our present system of registration of deaths and burial certificates. To trust the chances of exhumation; and the stages of decomposition for the discovery of unnatural deaths is infinitely clumsy and inadequate; and the necessary machinery for bringing criminals to justice in such a case, for instance, as the above, is exceedingly costly. The danger to such a population as ours from our present system of burial, demands that some radical change shall be made; and cremation appears to be the best that mankind has been able to devise. It is not a question of adopting cremation, and grafting it into our present arrangements—that would indeed be pouring new wine into old bottles—but of adopting a method that will very beneficially compel an alteration of existing rules and regulations. Not the most sanguine upholder of *laissez faire* will assert that the case of Ellen Franklin was the first of its kind in which the condemned prisoners had ever been engaged, and that Freeman forged a certificate for the first and only time in his professional career. For the one case that comes to justice, where are all those that do not? Why should there not be an official whose duty shall be the examination of bodies before the certificate of burial or cremation is granted? He should be attached to an office that does not yet exist, but will, most assuredly, one day, for the safe and decent disposal of the dead by the State, *i.e.*, by duly appointed people, whose business it will be to carry out the removal of the dead from the living. It will then be possible to deal a death-blow to the present costly funeral business, whereby months of pinching are often entailed on poor families by the heavy incubus of a "decent burying." It will be as necessary then as now for the medical man in charge to sign the death certificate, and very likely these certificates will have to give the name of the Nurse or Nurses who attended the dead in the last illness. The latter will be a gain all round. The Putney Mystery is yet one more eloquent appeal on behalf of the Royal Charter for Nurses. When Mrs. Francis has done her three years' penal servitude, how are the public to be protected from her if she elects to set up as a private Nurse—a not at all unlikely thing? She need not change her name, only her neighbourhood; that is all, at present. Or she can enter her name at some Nursing Institute where no disagreeable questions are asked as to the training and antecedents of the Nurse, but where an entrance fee covers any

multitude of sins. Verily it is not to be wondered at, that there is much opposition, from interested quarters, to a reform that threatens to smash up some very serious abuses!

## WOMEN INSPECTORS.

On Tuesday, the 24th ult., very large deputations from various societies waited on the Home Secretary to suggest to him the employment of Women Inspectors of Factories and Workshops, and it is pleasant to relate that the eloquence of the various speakers was poured into a sympathetic ear.

The lady who led the Tailoresses' Union made, we think, a great mistake in saying that *only* women who have worked in factories or workshops should be appointed; and the sneer at "dilettanti middle-class women" was in exceedingly bad taste, as the bulk of all the best philanthropic, educational, and political work done by women comes from the middle-class of society. Moreover, the speaker herself is a middle-class woman. Besides, long acquaintance with gentle manners and habits—leisure in life for intelligent thought and reading—with all the advantages that careful training and education supply, are more likely to produce a wise, sympathetic, and successful factory inspector, than the want of these, which is so bitter a drop in the cup of the operative, whose life from babyhood has had a battle for bread as its chief element and aim. Dilettanti-ism is not, as a rule, the vice of the middle-class woman when she aspires to a public office. The second deputation was led by the Countess of Aberdeen, and was that of the Women's Liberal Federation. Very common-sense and humane was the noble lady's plea for the appointment of women inspectors; and some of her listeners were of opinion that such a woman, if she could be found to take the post, would bring to the work of inspection a something immeasurably valuable both to employer and employed. The third deputation was introduced by Mrs. Shaen, Poor Law Guardian for Kensington, in the absence of Lady Henry Somerset, and consisted of representatives of The World's Women's Christian Temperance Union. Mrs. Ormiston Chant, who was introduced by Mrs. Shaen, evoked loud expressions of sympathy from the hundreds who filled up the great hall of the Foreign Office, when, after detailing terrible facts concerning the employment of young women in overcrowded rooms, heated by unscientific gas stoves, for cruelly long hours, on wholly inadequate pay, she wound up by saying: "These are the future mothers of England; with them largely rests the future of England—nay, of the race—and it is the first duty of the State to see that their young years are not drudged away in toil that breaks down health and heart, and to see that the factories, work-shops, and work-rooms where their life is spent come up to the standard of science and humanity. And to bring this about we must have Women Inspectors." After this came the Trades Union League, represented by glass-furnace and blast-furnace men, miners, and others, all unanimous about the appointment of women. So there were loud cheers when Mr. Asquith announced his intention of appointing two to begin with—one in London, and the other in Glasgow.

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