

tent ignored in the general Hospitals. It has been proved also beyond dispute, that many, if not all, of the great advances which have been made in medical and surgical treatment during the past half century have originated in, and have been achieved by, workers in special Hospitals. The treatment, for example, of the diseases of children which could not be efficiently carried out amidst the noise and other disturbing influences inseparably connected with the working of a ward in which adult patients of either sex were being nursed, became immediately possible as soon as the children could be isolated by themselves, could be tended by women of special experience in their management, and could be treated by medical men who devoted their whole time and attention to the consideration of such complaints. So, in like manner, the Hospitals for Women were able to carry out in their special wards operations which had been previously attended by such enormous mortality as to render their performance in a general Hospital a matter of the greatest doubt and professional dispute. It is not fifty years ago, since a well-known general surgeon declared that it would be a criminal act to perform a certain operation, although he, like all others, recognised that by such an operation alone could thousands of patients be restored to health and strength. And the mortality from septic diseases in most general Hospitals of that day, and the consequent terrible fatality which followed the performance in their wards of any specially critical operation, almost appeared to justify the saying. But in special Hospitals the operation was done, even then, successfully, and every year since has been done with such accumulated experience, knowledge and skill, that the mortality in the hands of experts now is less than four per cent. And guided by this experience, the operators in general Hospitals to-day are able to perform the same operations with nearly the same measure of success. If it were necessary to give further examples, it might be pointed out that in the treatment of diseases of the eye, which were undertaken by special Hospitals at a time when most general surgeons declined to deal with such cases, the immense progress which has been made, and the wonderful success which is to-day obtained, are once again solely due to the skill and to the experience gained in special institutions.

So far as Nursing is concerned, the advantages of special Hospitals are very great, for they afford opportunities for experience in the treatment of classes of cases, and of patients, which are rarely or never obtainable in the wards of an ordinary Nurse Training School. And seeing that many Nurses now adopt some

special branch of work after their ordinary training is completed, the experience gained in some such institution is invaluable both to themselves and to the patients upon whom they may thereafter be called on to attend.

There is another aspect to the question also, which is often overlooked. The medical profession, as a body, fully realises the advantages which flow from the work of special Hospitals, and it is not too much to say that a large proportion of the patients who go to such places are recommended to do so by their own medical attendant. The public also shrewdly argues that medicine nowadays is such a vast science that it is impossible for anyone to be equally learned and experienced in every branch, and that, of necessity, he must be the best qualified to diagnose and treat a case whose whole life's work consists in the special care of the same or similar complaints. Consequently, the tendency is growing greater every year for specialism to increase and become more popular, and it is evident to us that medical men in this matter, are but following a great natural law, and that therefore, in the future, as in the present, the tendency will be, in increasing measure, towards the promotion and support of special Hospitals, with probably a corresponding diminution in public contributions towards the maintenance of our general Hospitals.

PROFESSIONAL CONFIDENCE.

A CURIOUS trial involving points of great importance to medical men, midwives, and the public took place this week at the Central Criminal Court. A doctor was called in to see a patient and found her seriously ill. He suspected that illegal means had been adopted to procure a miscarriage, and apparently neither the patient nor her attendant, who is described as a midwife, denied this to him. He then took the unusual step of informing the police of his suspicions, and he appears also to have assisted them in obtaining further information. The result was that the midwife, a friend of his patient, and finally, the patient herself, were arrested and tried on a criminal charge. At the trial it was pleaded that whatever the midwife did, was done with the object of ascertaining the patient's exact condition, and it was proved that the patient's husband was aware of her proceedings, and that the insinuation made by the prosecution that there was an ulterior motive for the interest taken in the case by the third prisoner, was entirely unsupported by facts. Indeed, it would appear that in his case, at any rate, a very grave injustice may have been done. The jury found the prisoners Not Guilty. Both the medical profession and the public will keenly question the right of any medical man to act as an amateur detective, and so drag into publicity facts which must have been given to him in professional confidence, and which may affect most deeply the honour of his patients and the future lives and happiness of many other people.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)