

often producing quiet sleep and preventing the perspiration. In diabetes, it has been shown that the drug diminishes the amount of sugar and the excessive quantity of urine; and finally it evidently has a powerful action upon the nerves, for it has proved valuable in cases of chorea, epilepsy and hysteria, and as an anti-spasmodic in patients suffering from muscular cramp, colic and asthma. It seems probable, therefore, that the drug will in future be more largely employed than it is now.

#### FIRES AT HOSPITALS.

EVERY Nurse knows the terrible results which might follow from an outbreak of fire in an institution in which large numbers of helpless patients are confined to bed. Fortunately, within our time, no such calamity has occurred, and whenever Hospitals have taken fire, means have been successfully adopted to prevent disaster; and in most Institutions, nowadays, the resident staff are trained to the use of fire escapes and the hose. The State of New York has recently devoted considerable attention to this matter, and has just passed a law providing that all buildings which are used as asylums or hospitals, and which are more than two stories high, shall have properly constructed iron staircases on the outside of the premises, with suitable doorways leading upon these from each story above the first. The statute makes it the duty of the trustees or managers to construct and maintain such staircases, and in the event of their failing to do so, the local authorities are ordered to take the necessary steps, and to charge the cost upon the Hospital funds. There is no doubt that the precaution is a very valuable one, and that there are many Institutions in this country at which such an innovation would be of direct public benefit and safety.

#### TAPPING THE SPINAL CANAL.

A COMPARATIVELY novel operation, which has yielded in appropriate cases most excellent results, consists of tapping the spinal canal. In cases of meningitis, or of inflammation of the lining membrane of the spinal cord, the fluid which is secreted causes pressure upon the brain, or cord, sufficiently great to interfere with their functions, and the rational treatment therefore is to remove the fluid, if possible, and so obviate the injurious pressure. Cases in which this operation has been done have yielded remarkable results, the patient recovering rapidly, even when quite unconscious and apparently almost paralysed. The operation itself is very simple. A hypodermic needle attached to a syringe is passed into the spinal canal, and then the syringe, being unscrewed, the fluid is allowed to run through the needle into a basin of antiseptic fluid.

## Reflections

FROM A BOARD ROOM MIRROR.



THE EARL OF STRAFFORD has accepted the presidency of the Throat Hospital, Golden Square.

At the suggestion of the Duchess of Abercorn a committee has been formed in the city of Londonderry for the purpose of erecting almshouses as a memorial of the late Mrs. Alexander ("C.F.A."), the well-known hymn writer, and the late wife of the Bishop of Derry. Subscriptions may be forwarded to the Duchess of Abercorn, or to the hon. secretary of the fund, Mr. F. C. Macky, Belmont, Londonderry.

A gift of £2,000 has been received by the governors of the Hospital for Women, Soho Square, from a donor, as a perpetual endowment of two beds, "in loving memory of his young wife."

The Court of the Girdlers' Company have distributed £500 amongst various Hospitals and Charitable Institutions.

The Medical Press of last week reviews the circumstance which has led to the enforced retirement of Mr. Robert O'Callaghan, F.R.C.S.I., from the post of Surgeon to the Chelsea Hospital for Women, and we are entirely in sympathy with the *Lancet*, which remarks:—

"What was the real point at issue? Not Mr. O'Callaghan's opinions of the duties of a house surgeon. Not Mr. O'Callaghan's accuracy, which has been gravely impugned. The question before the meeting was, Is such a 'row' a domestic one, or is it one upon which arbitration from outside should be invited, the Executive of the Hospital being unable to manage the affairs of the Hospital properly? Mr. O'Callaghan was making no categorical defence; he was simply asking for arbitration. We have no hesitation in saying that under ordinary circumstances arbitration would have been unnecessary. Under ordinary circumstances a Board of Governors would have been the proper people to deal with the situation. But the management of the Chelsea Hospital for Women is not governed by a properly constituted lay Board. They are under a stigma. They should never have undertaken the business of the election of their present medical staff. At the time they did so they lay under the censure of an independent tribunal. We refer to the Committee of Investigation appointed by the Hospital authorities to inquire into Dr. Parkes's statements that he considered that the lay management of the Hospital was unsatisfactory. As a result of that report the medical staff of the Hospital resigned, and the lay management should have done the same. They were equally to blame then, and they still rest under the shadow of that blame. Now Mr. O'Callaghan has been dismissed by this discredited lay Board. A strong Board, above criticism, backed by its medical officers, should be able to discharge not one, but fifty honorary medical officers. But the lay management of the Chelsea Hospital for Women is not strong, and in undertaking the dismissal of Mr. O'Callaghan without formulating the charges against him, and giving proper reasons for refusing the conditional arbitration for which he prayed, they have made a mistake. On the merits of the case we express no opinion, but as to the value that arbitration would have had as a method of dealing with the case we have no doubt."

Mr. O'Callaghan has written to the press to point out that although 123 votes were polled at Wednesday's meeting only

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)