

instance, and from there, if necessary, to the *post-mortem* room; after this they are attended to, in the case of the men, by one of the bath men, and, in the case of women and children, by a woman who is employed for the purpose. They are then placed on slabs in the large Mortuary, which is never shown to visitors, and whenever the friends of a patient who has died wish to see the body it is passed on the slab through a hole in the wall on to the bier described above.

At St. Bartholomew's Hospital I was taken over to the Steward's Office, as the Mortuary arrangements there are under his control. Some conversation ensued, and then the Steward kindly instructed one of the porters to take me to the Mortuary. "It will all be in the NURSING RECORD you know" said my cicerone, somewhat doubtfully. "And why not" answered the Steward—"I don't know why it should not be; it is very nice and clean." And so we went over to the Mortuary. The Steward was right, it was very clean; the walls looked as if they had just been white-washed. The *post-mortem* room was the picture of cleanliness, and the disagreeable duties which fall to the lot of the porter in charge are evidently thoroughly and efficiently performed. But the Mortuary itself is certainly not a place where one would care to find one's dead. The bare white-washed walls, the sloping floor, the black lidless shells covered by white sheets, would depress most people even if they had no special interest in them. That this is felt to some extent by the Hospital authorities, is evident from the fact that when a member of the staff dies they do their best to make other arrangements for the disposal of the body until it is removed from the Hospital. It would be a happy and graceful act if the Hospital were to build in memory of Rahere, its pious founder, a Mortuary Chapel where the dead might rest so long as they remained under its care.

At St. George's Hospital the authorities are contemplating improving their Mortuary arrangements shortly. At present the shells containing the bodies are placed in numbered pigeon holes, and brought out as required. The mortuary itself appeared sanitary and well ventilated. There is a bier, with india-rubber tyred wheels, on which the shells are taken up to the wards. I cannot now recall without a shudder the tramp of the porters, their appearance in the ward carrying a black shell, covered by a scanty piece of dirty blue serge, to which use never accustomed me in my early Hospital days. The gruesomeness of the whole proceeding had, I am sure, a distinctly injurious effect upon the surviving patients in the ward. The noiseless bier therefore seems an improvement in the right direction. It is

seen to perfection at the Metropolitan Hospital in the Kingsland Road. The bier at this Hospital is supplied with a mattress and pillow, which are covered with American cloth which is easily washed and carbolised, so that no shell goes up to the ward. When a death occurs notice is sent from the ward to the out-patient Nurse, who tells the porters when they will be wanted. The Nurse makes up the bier as a bed, Mortuary linen being specially supplied to the out-patient department for this purpose; the cradle which is placed over it fits into sockets prepared to receive it, and the whole is covered by an ample washing pall made of white linen with a red cross in Turkey twill stretching from end to end and from side to side. The Nurse accompanies the bier up to the ward and back again to the Mortuary. The Mortuary at this Hospital is small, but the best that can be done under the circumstances is done. The *post-mortem* room is screened off by a dark mackintosh curtain, and the empty shells in the Mortuary itself are hidden by a similar arrangement. A little shelf, as at Guy's, contains cross, candles and flowers. The out-patient Nurse is responsible for the Mortuary, and always goes down with any friends of deceased patients who may wish to visit it.

At St. Thomas's there is a most thoughtful arrangement for mourners, as there is a comfortable waiting room provided for them. This is in the charge of a homely kindly woman, who accompanies the relatives into the Mortuary, and who sees that all arrangements are made to spare their feelings as much as may be. The waiting room opens into a large and airy room; the floor of this is tessellated, the walls tiled for some distance up, and beyond this they are painted with a washing paint. Into this room is brought from the larger Mortuary any body which the friends may wish to see.

At the Homœopathic Hospital in Great Ormond Street there is a new Mortuary, *post-mortem* room, and pathological museum. There is ample space for these latter, but the Mortuary itself seems somewhat inconveniently cramped.

It was at the Children's Hospital in Great Ormond Street that I found my ideal—a beautiful little Mortuary Chapel, in which is ample space for all the bodies to rest until they are removed from the Hospital. The east end of the Chapel is semi-circular, and over the altar are placed a cross and vases of flowers. Along the front of the altar run the words "Is it well with the child? It is well," and other texts are painted on the walls. The whole atmosphere of the place is one of peace, and no one whose child lies there would go away from a visit to this Chapel without feeling that the one resting there is reverently and lovingly cared for.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)