

Reflections

FROM A BOARD ROOM MIRROR.



BY special permission of the Prince of Wales, an X ray photograph of H.R.H.'s hand may be obtained from G. Houghton & Son, 89, High Holborn, W.C.; the profits accruing from the sales to be devoted to Guy's Hospital Endowment Fund.

At a recent meeting of the Grand Council of the Primrose League—Sir F. D. Dixon-Hartland in the Chair—it was resolved that the Primrose League should commemorate the 60th reign of the Queen by raising a substantial sum to be given to the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses.

There is a debt of upwards of £4,000 on the Great Northern Central Hospital, which is an unendowed General Hospital. Towards the extinction of this debt donations amounting to one thousand guineas have been promised. These donations are, however, hedged by the condition that the balance is obtained by the end of the current year. An appeal is being made to the charitable for donations large and small, so that the Hospital, which is doing really good work, may be put on a secure basis.

We would call Lord Winchelsea's attention to the fact that, in his own County, the Lincoln Board of Guardians have decided to advertise for Danish butter to be consumed in the Workhouse in place of fresh home-made. An opportunity was given to the local farmers to send in their tenders, *but not one took the trouble to do so*, and, consequently, the Board felt quite justified in recommending foreign butter, which they could easily obtain and which would cost less. The Lincolnshire farmers have clearly brought this punishment on their own heads.

At a late meeting of the Burnley Board of Guardians, Lady O'Hagan moved a resolution that a dentist should be instructed to attend to the children in the Cottage Homes whose teeth were in a bad condition, and in consequence of this their health suffered. Mrs. Brown seconded this excellent resolution. Mr. Barlow, in a Bumble spirit, spoke strongly in the negative on the ground that these were "Workhouse children, the bulk of whom belonged to parents who caused most trouble in the country." We wonder, should Mr. Barlow be suffering from excruciating toothache, would he pause to consider the moral attributes of his parents and grandfather before going for relief to a dentist? The matter was referred back to the Committee, who we hope will support Lady O'Hagan in her humane suggestion.

The *Lancet* has started a Special Commission to deal with Hospital abuse—and in last week's issue St. Thomas's Hospital is dealt with, and the following statements are made with regard to the much-criticised Home for Paying Patients in connection with this Institution:—

"In the Home attached to the Hospital operations are also constantly performed for nothing on persons

who can well afford to pay. It is true that, lately, the patients have been called upon to sign a declaration stating that they cannot afford to pay the surgeon's fee, but it is astonishing with what cheerfulness patients will sign these declarations without any regard to their truthfulness. They seem to think that if they pay the guinea for the administration of the chloroform, the guinea for the surgeon's assistant, and the three guineas a week for their maintenance, they have given quite enough, and need not pay the surgeon anything at all. It does not occur to these persons that if they pay only three guineas a week it is because they are living rent-free. St. Thomas's Home pays its own expenses and even yields a profit, but this is only due to the fact that the building is part of the Hospital, and is occupied rent-free. Therefore, even the Home, so far as the rent is concerned, must be considered as a charity, and, therefore, should only be accessible to those who are at least, comparatively speaking, in needy circumstances.

Instead of a charity, however, the Home has degenerated into a sort of hotel business. It is advertised extensively all over the world, and especially in the colonies, and, in consequence of its lax administration, the idea is spreading that it is not necessary to pay for operations. Patients who have previously paid large fees—perhaps £40 or even £100—come to St. Thomas's Home to be operated on for nothing. A case was described to me of a patient who came to be operated on for cancer, and paid a good fee to the surgeon. This person, however, noticed that many of her fellow-patients did not pay at all, and as she had to return subsequently for a second operation, she determined to follow their example. On her second visit to the Home she refused to call in and pay her own surgeon, and demanded to be operated on gratuitously by the resident medical officer.

In this it will be seen that the interests of the Home and the interests of the profession clash. It does not make any difference financially to the Home whether the patient calls in a surgeon from the outside and pays him, or avails himself of the gratuitous services of the resident medical officer. The profits are derived from the three guineas a week paid for maintenance, and the interest of the Home is to have as many paying patients as possible. It would be an act of sheer altruism to send a paying patient away because he could afford to call in an outside surgeon and refused to do so. In business matters we cannot expect to find such altruism, and the great complaint against the Home is that it has degenerated into a business.

The principal qualification for admittance is the payment of the three guineas a week. Thus, some time ago, a patient died from phthisis. On these terms he had been in the Home for more than three months, and yet, when his will was proved, it was shown that he was worth more than £4,000 a year. Another case was also mentioned to me of a retired Colonel who goes periodically to the Home to, as he puts it, 'refit.' If these persons wish to be nursed in a Home, there are plenty of Homes that are not based on a charity. The charges are higher because they include the payment of rent, but rich people have no right to live rent free. The exemption from rent is intended as a charity to help those who are in difficulties."

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