

always be employed for such a case, would amount to at least three guineas a week; that there should be special attention given both to the day and night nursing of the patient; that both day and night nurses have not only to be paid, but boarded and lodged; and that finally the diet of the patient is a very special and expensive one—consisting for the most part of large quantities of meat, milk and cream. It can, therefore, be easily understood why the cost of such nursing and treatment at an ordinary hotel has been proved by actual experience to amount to more than £20 a week; and even in a Nursing Home—in which of course greater economy is possible—it has been proved to be unremunerative to nurse such patients, if they paid less than ten guineas a week. Therefore, by the time the salaries of the nurses and masseuse are paid, and the board and lodging of the former are allowed for, there can be no possible margin of profit left on such a case—if properly cared for and dieted—if only paying six guineas a week.

We consider that the first important point raised by this case is the fact that the Home in question, and many similar Institutions, apparently pretend that it is possible to obtain so expensive a method of treatment at so low a price. We desire to make our meaning quite clear, because a great principle is involved in this matter. We assert, without fear of contradiction, that it is impossible, from a purely commercial point of view, that the Weir-Mitchell treatment can be properly given for six guineas a week. The inevitable consequence is that, in order to obtain a profit and thus enable the Home to exist, the patient has to be deprived of the promised treatment. In this case for example, it was shown upon sworn evidence how the economy is effected; the patient did not receive the meat meals and large quantities of cream, milk, eggs, and so forth, which are essential, but was fed "mostly upon salt beef, white herrings, eggs bought at 16 a shilling and milk made from the cheapest brands of condensed tins." When she expressed a desire for some fish, "the secretary" was sent out to purchase "a twopenny piece of fish from a fried fish shop." Could anything more eloquently describe a sordid method of management and an absolute disregard of all proper provision for the sick.

It is evident that the public are not to blame if they are thus treated, and that

practically they are defenceless against such deceit and trickery; and this aspect of the question appears to have influenced the County Court Judge in his severe remarks upon the plaintiff's conduct, and his refusal to award her the amount for which she claimed. It is of course indisputable that such a diet as that described was not only delusive but was calculated to do a delicate patient harm rather than good. Nothing was apparently said in the evidence as to the massage or electrical treatment having been administered; but as a Mrs. Robinson, to whose evidence we shall again refer, was "engaged to sit up with the patient at night although she had no experience in nursing," it seems probable that the patient did not even receive proper nursing attention.

We are well aware, from a wide experience of Nursing Homes in the metropolis, that this particular case is typical of one of the worst features of many of these Institutions. We propose therefore to use the facts of this particular case in general criticism of such places, and not with direct reference to any special Home.

The two great questions which arise in connection with a Nursing Home are the safety of the public and the commercial success of the Institution. We maintain that the two are quite compatible; and that a first-class Nursing Home, liberally managed upon the best possible lines, may be so conducted as to prove remunerative to its proprietors. On the other hand, we have abundant evidence to prove that a very large number of the Homes, with which the West End of London at present abounds, are not conducted upon such lines, and that, in consequence, they are neither profitable to their owners, nor do they offer safety to the sick public. To go at once to the cause of this serious state of affairs, we believe that the reason may be found in the fact that a number of people, entirely ignorant of Nursing matters, have taken upon themselves the grave responsibilities of starting and conducting such Homes; and, secondly, that the thoroughly-qualified nurses who undertake such work are in too many instances unprovided either with the necessary amount of capital, or with sufficient knowledge of business, or perhaps with both requisites. The matter is so important, as we have said, to everyone concerned, that we propose to deal with these various aspects of the case, in future issues of this journal.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)