

so far, as Sir James Crichton Browne is concerned, for we can conceive, for instance, that the morality which decrees that an "express letter which has been registered," is not a "registered letter" is engendered in an atmosphere breathed by but few, as is also the form of argument conveyed in the words "I order it," in overruling recognized laws of procedure in conducting public business; but it cannot be conceded that animals do not possess a moral sense. Who is there who cannot call to mind the shame expressed by a horse or a dog after a wrong action? and, in a lesser degree perhaps, but still certainly, the same moral sense is found in cats, monkeys, and even chimpanzees.

Again, Sir James Crichton Browne tells us that the fundamental portion of the brain is fixed some months before birth, and that all future changes are but elaboration and development, so that "it would seem," says the local press, "that he held the 'theory of great mothers'; but he is careful to point out that the mothers of many men of genius have been women of only average, if not inferior, qualifications." It would be interesting to know if Sir James Crichton Browne is acquainted with any women whose qualifications are, in his opinion, more than average and inferior. Sir James Crichton Browne considers that our ignorance of the fount and origin of the moral sense "cannot but be beneficial. It prevents us from assuming an authority over all things, of insisting on explanations where none are warranted, and maintaining that suspension of judgment which is a necessity of scientific inquiry." If this is the attitude of mind in which Sir James Crichton Browne approaches scientific subjects, we can only regret that he leaves behind the atmosphere of the laboratory, when he deals with more practical and mundane matters. Finally, Sir James Crichton Browne impressed on his audience the "unwisdom of idolizing the natural man, and refusing to listen to the ethical harmonies, which mingle with the fierce discords of the fight, and which happily grow more and more audible as time rolls on." We do not remember ever having heard advice of this description fall from the lips of Sir James Crichton Browne before. Perhaps he thinks that the members of the Royal British Nurses' Association, more particularly those whom he has designated the "small and turbulent section," are not in any danger of "idolizing

the natural man." We wonder if Sir James Crichton Browne hears the "ethical harmonies, which mingle with the fierce discords of the fight," now proceeding in the Royal British Nurses' Association. They ought to be distinctly audible at present we imagine, as time has been "rolling on" for some years. To ears, less trained and astute, however, the "fierce discords" are certainly the prevailing sound. We should advise Sir James Crichton Browne to devote any time he can spare from scientific research to the study of the "ethical atmosphere" which surrounds the "small and turbulent." The right understanding of this might lead to harmonies which would be audible to the ordinary world, in which case the Association might regain some of the prestige which it enjoyed before "the Great Betrayal."

UNAUTHORIZED POST-MORTEM EXAMINATIONS.

FROM time to time the question is raised before the public as to whether or no the friends of a patient in a hospital, or the patient himself, have given consent for an operation which has been performed. The latest instance of this, has occurred in connection with a case at St. Thomas's Hospital. The father of the patient, at the inquiry held by the Deputy-Coroner for South-West London, Mr. Walter Schroeder, denied that he had authorized the operation, but this was subsequently proved to the satisfaction of the jury. We think that it is quite time that some system for obtaining a written authorization for operations to be performed, should be instituted, and we confess that, after the experience which St. Thomas's Hospital has recently had in the case of *Beatty v. Cullingworth*, that we are surprised that some such system of self-defence has not been adopted.

The second charge brought by the father of the deceased boy against the hospital, and proved by him, was that a post-mortem examination had been performed without his consent. Mr. Sydney Phillips, steward to St. Thomas's Hospital, gave evidence that he "thought everyone knew that such an examination would be made." We are of opinion that it is absolutely unjustifiable to perform post-mortem examinations without first obtaining the consent of the friends of the deceased person, and we are glad to observe that the jury and coroner, in the case in question, were of the same opinion.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)