

SERIOUS CHARGES AGAINST THE STRATFORD INFECTIOUS HOSPITAL.

At a recent meeting of the Stratford Rural District Council, Mr. G. Euston said that at the last meeting it was reported that a child was being nursed at home with diphtheria which had had scarlet fever in June, making it appear that it was nursed at home with fever. As a matter of fact it went to the hospital with fever on June 23rd and was discharged on July 28th, and died of diphtheria nine days afterwards, so he presumed that it contracted diphtheria while in the hospital. The medical officer, Dr. Thomson, admitted that these dates were correct, but said that if he went into every case in detail to the Council it would take half-an-hour. Mr. Euston maintained that the case called for investigation, particularly as the Matron told the mother that the child had a sore throat when it left. Furthermore, two children named Belcher came out with their heads full of vermin. He was informed that the Matron was all over the country on a bicycle, and while she was doing that she was not attending to her duties. It was said that these things should be investigated by a Committee, but he was of opinion that they should not be hushed up. Another member of the Committee enquired whether the attention of the Matron had been called to this negligence, which really was very gross indeed. The Rev. E. Cooper made enquiries concerning the death of a child admitted "presumably for scarlet fever, but which, when supposed to be getting well, developed a malignant disorder and died. It was reported that the child was not seriously ill when admitted, and that it died of diphtheria. He had been accused of being the murderer of the child, because he asked Dr. Thomson to investigate the case. Dr. Thomson said the child died of malignant scarlet fever. It was not for him to say whether it was wise to have, as members of the Joint Committee, those who stultified their own action at these meetings; but he objected to take responsibility other than that of medical superintendent. He was supposed to be supplied with a responsible staff. He did not say there was no fault to be found, or that one or two dismissals would not follow this complaint; but personally he was doing much more work than he was paid for. If the Council thought they could have a hospital without deaths, they had better get some one else to manage it. The matter then dropped.

We hope, however, it will not be allowed to drop without a full investigation taking place. We are not aware who is the Matron of this hospital, but for her own sake we should advise her to demand an enquiry into the allegations made, as they reflect seriously upon her professional reputation; and if untrue, should be disproved. If true, then palpably, in the interests of the sick, radical changes should be made in the institution.

ARMY ORDERLIES.

We are informed on good authority that not long since one of the orderlies in a military hospital devised an ingenious, if undesirable, way of increasing his supply of ready money. He was aware of a friendship between two of the nursing sisters, one of whom was absent from the hospital, and having the same name as the second sister he telegraphed to the absentee for the loan of £2. The sister not suspecting that the telegram did not come from her friend immediately sent a remittance, which was received by the orderly. At the same hospital an orderly made his way over the garden wall and abstracted a £5 note from a room in an adjoining building. As he exchanged the note at the canteen, when in a semi-intoxicated condition, suspicion was aroused, and the theft was ultimately brought home to the perpetrator. We draw attention to these facts, because, in view of the agitation which is being raised in some quarters that the nursing in military hospitals should be performed entirely by orderlies, we think it desirable to point out the type of men who would be entrusted with the care of the sick soldier. We are by no means affirming that all orderlies are dishonest, but it is well known that the majority of them come from the uneducated classes, and so long as this is the case, and it seems likely that it will always be so, it cannot be desirable that they should be placed in absolute control of the nursing in army hospitals. The point was insisted upon at the recent International Congress of Women by Mrs. Quintard, that it is impossible to get the same class of men as women for army nurses. Refined educated women will offer their services, but educated gentlemen do not do so. Surely the higher intelligence, and the general influence of the gentlewoman must be immense factors in the efficient nursing of the sick, and it will be an ill day when her influence is no longer felt in our military hospitals.

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