

Legal Matters.

UNLICENSED HOMES FOR LUNATICS.

The need of some supervision and control of private nursing homes is constantly receiving fresh confirmation.

On Saturday last the proprietors of a nursing home at Tollington Park, Mr. and Mrs. James Roach, were summoned at the North London Police Court, at the instance of the Commissioners in Lunacy, on the ground that they had taken charge, for payment, of certain alleged lunatics in an unlicensed house. The details of the management of this home brought out in the course of the evidence given were illuminating. The first witness called was Dr. Edward Marriott Cook, one of the Commissioners in Lunacy, who said that he, in company with another Commissioner, visited the home under an order of the Lord Chancellor. They were admitted by Mrs. Roach, who was dressed as a nurse. On inspecting the home, they found eleven patients, nine of whom showed signs of mental derangement, and two of whom were certifiably insane. The patients were, with two others, in a room 18 feet by 8 feet. The smell and general condition of the room were improper for sick or elderly persons. In most of the rooms the bedding was wet, and the smell most offensive. A strait jacket, which was a most improper instrument to use, except under medical direction, was found in the room occupied by the alleged lunatics, and Mrs. Roach admitted having used it. Evidence was given by a woman who had assisted in the house that in her opinion two of the patients were quite insane, but harmless. One of them had visitors. When visitors were expected the old lady was removed to another room where the conditions were better. The patients were not washed every day, but were always washed on visiting days, which were on Wednesday and Sunday. She had seen one of the patients in a strait jacket, and also seen her arms tied to the bedposts.

The magistrate, Mr. Fordham, said there was no evidence against the man, and the summonses against him were dismissed. With regard to Mrs. Roach, he said there was no evidence of gross or intentional neglect, but it was necessary to warn people that it was a very serious offence to keep lunatics in unlicensed houses. Mrs. Roach would have to pay £20 with £5 5s. costs on the first summons, or undergo three months' imprisonment, and on the second £5 or one month, the sentences to run concurrently.

It would be interesting to know what constitutes gross neglect of nursing care in the opinion of this magistrate if offensive rooms, wet beds, and want of attention to the personal cleanliness of patients cannot be so described.

Nursing Echoes.

*** All communications must be duly authenticated with name and address, not for publication, but as evidence of good faith, and should be addressed to the Editor, 20, Upper Wimpole Street, W.*



The promptitude, discipline, courage, and unselfish devotion exhibited by the nursing staff of Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, during the recent disastrous fire in which one of the wards was entirely demolished have been warmly eulogised by the local Press. The Matron, Miss Morgan, showed great administrative ability, and the nurses "went about their work with admirable coolness, and showed splendid discipline and devotion to duty. There was no unnecessary hurry, no appearance of alarm, and yet no loss of time." Thus a panic was avoided, and the wards cleared marvellously quickly, the patients being carried out on to the lawn. There hot tea and light refreshments were served, while some of the nurses waded ankle-deep through water, and up stairs down which streams were pouring, to procure warm wraps for their charges. An eye-witness says of the scene:—"Cambridge people should never forget the sight their eyes were afforded of the devotion, courage, self-control, and thoughtfulness of the hospital staff. It impressed me more than any of the moving incidents connected with the fire."

It must surely strike the casual visitor to most of our hospitals that the way in which they are invited to stroll round the institution in search of the Matron is somewhat extraordinary. In one or two hospitals, it is true, this official sits in an inner sanctum, the approach to which is guarded by nursing subordinates in an outer room; but, in by far the greater number of hospitals, on inquiry at the door the porter on duty indicates the direction of the Matron's room, and the visitor proceeds on her quest.

To the average person there appear obvious disadvantages in this casual arrangement. In the first place, speaking as a modest visitor, one is somewhat diffident at presenting oneself unannounced in the office of a busy hospital Matron; and in the second place, it must surely be disconcerting to a methodical woman to be liable to interruption at any moment from strangers whose business may or may not be of importance. We commend to hospital authorities

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