

Reflections.

FROM A BOARD ROOM MIRROR.



the rebuilding of the hospital in Great Portland Street, W.

The Chelsea Hospital for Women concluded its Christmas Festivities for the patients and nurses on Saturday last. The usual celebrations on Christmas Day and the concert given by the nurses on Boxing Day were greatly appreciated by the inmates, as also was the Tea provided by the Ladies' Committee on December 29th, when Mrs. Micholls brought the Ladies' Choir from the Lyceum Club to sing hymns and carols.

The Ladies' Committee were also responsible for the programme on Saturday last. There was a large number of visitors, and tea was provided for all present, after which Mr. Bertram delighted the company for an hour with some of his wonderful card tricks. The demand was still for more, when the time came for the distribution from a big Christmas tree, laden with useful presents for nurses and patients, as well as with toys for the small folk at home.

The Matron, Miss E. C. Laurence, wearing her Royal Red Cross, and the Secretary, Mr. Herbert Jennings, were indefatigable in their efforts to make the day a success. The hospital looked charming, the wards were adorned with lovely flowers, the colour scheme being varied in each. The Christmas decorations, however, were confined, for the most part, to the halls and corridors, and were most artistically carried out.

The new Belfast Lunatic Asylum at Purdysburn is being built on the villa system, and two of the villas are now occupied, fifty patients being installed in each. Mr. G. M. Courtney, Inspector of Asylums, in his annual report to the Asylums Committee, says:—"At Purdysburn the villas now in use afford examples of the most modern and most liberal ideas of the proper treatment of the insane. In these comfortable and elegantly-furnished houses every effort is made to remove those curtailments of personal liberty usually met with; the doors are always open and the windows down to their fullest extent. The homely surroundings which prevail must add greatly to the comfort and happiness of the patients. The cooking is done by one of the nurses, assisted by some of the patients." Surely the employment of the insane in the preparation of food is somewhat risky.

Infantile Mortality.*

By WILLIAM BERRY, F.R.C.S.I., J.P.,
Medical Officer, County Borough of Wigan.

LADIES,—When your President (Mrs. Halliwell) asked me to give an address to your members I rather foolishly assented, not because I am unwilling to do all I can to interest you in your work, but because it is difficult to find something new to speak about; one gets hold of stale subjects and therefore is liable to give you a repetition of what you already know.

I have chosen the subject of Infantile Mortality because it is one that affects you more or less, and you can in some little way help the Health Authorities of the town to diminish it.

Wigan has a fairly high rate of Infantile Mortality, but there are many factors contributing to this. We are no worse off than our neighbours, but this is no excuse, and we must do what we can to keep our own house in order to reduce it. Each town and district has its own factor in this respect. You must remember that we have a high birth rate; whenever this is the case you must have a proportionate high infantile death rate. Compared with other towns we have not the number of nursing women working when suckling, we have some but not a great number. Our men prefer to work and keep their wives and families. In some places where the rates of wages is high for women we find the men prefer to stay at home or at the street corners. You will see from my annual report of last year that we had a death rate (infantile) of 163 per 1,000 births, whereas in England and Wales it was only 128 and in the County of Lancashire 132. In Aspull it was 202 and Ince in Makerfield 202. But if you will subtract 49, the number of infants who did not live more than 24 hours, you will find our rate 114, and we must take this into serious account because with the high birth rate which I have spoken of, namely, 33.04 per 1,000 of the population against 27.2 for England and Wales, we necessarily get a high rate comparatively. You must have a few weedlings that are better dead and allow the fittest to survive. Of course it is necessary to save the weak ones, but if they have not sufficient stamina to live beyond twenty-four hours we cannot do much with them. This year we have heard a great deal of the infantile death rate, just as if all children born into the world could be brought up until they reached manhood and womanhood; this, of course, is impossible. I attended a Conference in London on the subject of Infantile Mortality. The Right Hon. John Burns gave an admirable address and pointed out that drink, poverty and improvidence were large factors in the cause of this high death rate.

There is no doubt about the matter of education doing a lot to improve this state of matters, but to put everything down to drink and poverty is not quite right. You will find splendid specimens of healthy children amongst the poor who suckle their children, they themselves have to live on rough food,

* An Address delivered to the Wigan Midwives' Guild.

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