

Our Black List.

AN ACCOMPLISHED SWINDLER.

The danger to the public of criminals in the guise of nurses has once more been exemplified in the case of Christina Alexandra Gordon Stuart Price, otherwise Catherine Fraser, who was last week sentenced at the Nottingham and Notts. Assizes for obtaining goods on false pretences. In passing sentence the Commissioner, Mr. E. Tindall Atkinson, K.C., addressed the prisoner thus:—"You are an accomplished swindler. That is the history of you, and the sentence of the Court is that you be sent to imprisonment for two years with hard labour." It is significant of the prisoner's ability to create a favourable impression that even the jury which heard the evidence against her, when finding her guilty strongly recommended her to mercy. His Lordship remarked that they had not the slightest notion of her career or they would not have done so.

AN AMAZING CAREER.

Mrs. Price, who is the daughter of a Welsh Methodist preacher, served an apprenticeship to a milliner in Carnarvon, and then began her career as a nurse. She appears to have been a probationer at Guy's Hospital, London, and the Southern Hospital, Manchester. She is also said to have worked in hospitals at Nottingham, Leicester, and Loughborough, and to have held a position as Sanitary Inspector in the Isle of Wight.

She appears to have come within the arm of the law first at Edinburgh, in 1898, where she was convicted on a charge of fraud and sentenced to pay a fine of £20 or to imprisonment for 20 days. She underwent the latter sentence, and on her release was rearrested at the gates of the gaol by a Scotland Yard detective, and subsequently sentenced to seventeen months hard labour at the North London Sessions for fraud and larceny. Having served that sentence she again took up nursing, and in June or July of 1900 was engaged in that capacity by Lady Wimborne, obtaining the post by means of false references. She was dismissed in December of the same year for obtaining goods by fraud but no proceedings were taken. In 1902 she went to a nursing institution in Bedford, and from there was sent to nurse her present husband's grandmother. The old lady died, but the "nurse" had made herself so acceptable in that house that, knowing she had no home, and "as a mark of esteem for the admirable way in which she had nursed her mother," she was invited by the daughter, Mrs. Price, to stay on, a kindness she requited by eloping with the son of her hostess, to whom she was married at the Presbyterian Church, Brighton. After her marriage she was admitted to a nursing home in Brighton, and incurred a debt of £34, which has never been paid. The proprietress of the institution is of opinion that there was nothing whatever the matter with her. Being in financial difficulties Mr. and Mrs. Price were assisted by his relations to Madeira, where he followed his trade as an engineer, and she opened a nursing home. On their return, in 1906, Mrs. Price negotiated a partnership for her husband in

a motor-car business. By representing that she had £2,000 in the London and County Bank at Tunbridge Wells, but could not then free it, she succeeded in borrowing £1,500 by arrangement with the vendor's bankers, to whom she obtained an introduction, and at once entered into the partnership. Six months later she obtained a motor-car from a firm in London, who accepted a post-dated cheque. On obtaining a receipt for this she went to a money-lender, and by showing the receipt obtained a loan of £500 by giving the car as security. She borrowed £450 on a reversion, and paid what was still owing on the car. She then furnished a house elaborately at Tunbridge Wells, where again she and her husband got into money difficulties, and County Court proceedings were taken against them. In May of the present year they went out to Buenos Ayres, but only remained there a few weeks, and returned to England in a cattle-bout, when they went to Nottingham.

There Mrs. Price again turned her attention to nursing matters, and once more, by plausible stories in regard to the nursing home she was going to open, obtained goods from Nottingham tradespeople on false pretences, on which ground she was arrested at Birkenhead and tried and sentenced at Nottingham.

THE MORAL.

The important point for the public to note in connection with this case is the ease with which this accomplished swindler could obtain employment as a trained nurse in private houses between the times of her incarceration in gaol for criminal offences. In her evidence in her own defence she stated that she had been offered nursing engagements in the Argentine, and that she could have done well there, and that she had "always been a success in her nursing career." It is noteworthy that she had "between ten and twelve trunks full of personal belongings, as well as silver plate, jewellery, and effects."

THE REMEDY—STATE REGISTRATION.

There is only one means of effectively protecting the public from women of this kind, and that is by the establishment of a system of State registration of trained nurses. Those who are endeavouring to prevent the inauguration of this system are therefore primarily responsible for the fact that thieves and swindlers can, when not in gaol, "make a success" of nursing, and prey on the sick with impunity. Is it not high time that the public, for its own protection, should demand that whether State registration of nurses is acceptable or not to employers of nursing labour, and nurse sweaters, who desire to keep nurses unorganised, it shall, in the public interest, be no longer delayed? The present condition of affairs is scandalous and unjust.

Irish Nurses' Association.

Miss Ella Ovenden, M.D., gave a lecture to the members of the above Association at their rooms, 86, Lower Leeson Street, Dublin, on Friday, the 15th inst. The subject was "Hygiene." The lecture, which was both interesting and instructive, was illustrated by lantern slides. The next lecture will be given on Wednesday, December 11th, by Gibbon Fitzgibbon, Esq., M.D.

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