

THE  
**BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING**  
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
**THE NURSING RECORD**  
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,108.

SATURDAY, JUNE 26, 1909.

XLII.

**Editorial.**

**HOSPITAL MORTUARIES.**

“And I smiled to think God’s greatness flowed around  
our incompleteness,  
Round our restlessness, His rest.”

—*H. B. Browning.*

The subject of hospital mortuaries has recently been receiving considerable attention, and there is a growing feeling that they should be better equipped and supervised. Amongst the many mortuaries we have visited none has appeared more seemly than that at the Royal Infirmary, Liverpool, which might well serve as a model for other institutions which are contemplating reconstruction. On entering the mortuary one’s impression is that one might be in a ward of the hospital, containing apparently eight beds, four on either side, each with its white quilt (bearing the letters I.H.S.), its spotless top sheet, and pillow. The air is as fresh and sweet as in any of the wards, and there is nothing to shock the susceptibility of visitors. Only closer investigation shows that the beds are actually shallow trays of enamelled iron, that an eternal quiet has settled upon the still forms which occupy them, that only the perishable part of men and women who once worked and strove, loved and suffered through this “fitful fever we call life” remains there, and that which is imperishable has, in the words of a hospital patient of his dead comrade, “gone to learn the great secret.”

The lesson of death, to those who are familiar with it, is surely one of hope for the future; the peace and rest on each still face remind us that

“The love of God is broader  
Than the measure of man’s mind,  
And the heart of the Eternal  
Is most wonderfully kind.”

That the teachings of the narrow and

unloving divine of Geneva are false and un-Godlike, and that the Creator of the world has not in store for His children — with the exception of a favoured few—a torment which has no remedial purpose and which is unending; that the gift offered to the whole world by the Cross of Christ is the gift of eternal life, and that, search as you will, you will nowhere find it written that the destination of the majority of the human race is the everlasting torment which has too often been read into the sacred writings. So a mortuary is a comforting place to those who have agonised over the riddle of life and death, for it teaches that the key is with the All-wise and All-loving, where it can securely be left.

To return to the mortuary of the Liverpool Royal Infirmary; attached to it is an ice chamber, communicating with the post-mortem room, in which in the hot weather the bodies are placed. The whole arrangements are most interesting and satisfactory, including that by which the patient is removed from the ward to the mortuary on the bedstead on which he died—the whole being cleansed and disinfected before it is returned to the ward.

We wish that nurses would, wherever possible, study mortuary arrangements, of which most of them know far too little, so that they may understand what is done in other institutions, and bring influence to bear to secure the best possible arrangements in any hospital with which they are connected. To bring the light of publicity to bear upon mortuaries is peculiarly incumbent on nurses, for the ordinary visitor does not ask to see the hospital mortuary when he visits the wards, nor is it seemly that he should do so. But the work of nurses amongst the sick and dying gives them a right of entry of which they should avail themselves.

M. B.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)