

## NURSE CHARGED WITH THEFT.

At Nailsworth Police Court (Stroud), on Tuesday, August 10th, before Mr. A. T. Playne, Edith Eleanor Wyles (37), a nurse, formerly employed by Mrs. Blackwell, of the Highlands, Minchinhampton, was charged with stealing from her employer between July 6th and July 29th one silver box, one gold rule, one gilt needlecase, one nightgown and a quantity of other wearing apparel, one pair of lady's boots, one real lace cape, one gold bracelet, one pair of gold-rimmed eyeglasses, one linen sheet, two small serviettes, one night cap, one pair of night socks, one pair of silk stockings, two pieces of lace, one bottle of eau de Cologne, one bottle of apenta, one syphon soda water bottle, two carved wood figures, one packet of cocoa, one bottle of cold cream, one quarter pound bag of tea, dessert papers and notepaper, 16 volumes of books, six composite candles, two pieces of soap, one box of Goddard's plate powder, one box of brown boot polish, one bottle of cream polish, one gold bodkin, one gold pencil case, one pair of gold spectacles, and one gold thimble, together of the value of £32 12s. 3½d.

The prisoner appeared in the dock in nursing uniform, and was defended by Mr. A. Ivor Parry.

Miss J. A. A. Laird, cousin of Mrs. Blackwell, deposed that prisoner was engaged through an advertisement inserted in the *Nursing Mirror*. Witness did not then inquire into the genuineness of the testimonials. Prisoner arrived on July 6th, and a day or so later, as well as on subsequent occasions, witness noticed that she smelt strongly of drink. On July 28th she was found drunk, and before that the butler had complained of missing spirits. Dr. Waller was sent for and the nurse superseded. In consequence of suspicions her boxes were searched, and several pawn tickets and some of the stolen articles found. The wages due to accused, with a £1 in addition, were paid to her and she was discharged for drunkenness; she left on July 29th. Next morning a letter was received from her requesting a month's notice. A telegram from London also came requesting that certain articles should be sent to her. Witness had found that the testimonials were counterfeit. The prisoner also threatened to take legal proceedings against Mrs. Blackwell. Witness subsequently identified articles found in prisoner's possession. It was suggested by the prisoner, but denied by Mrs. Blackwell, that some of the articles were given to her. She admitted having taken some while in a state of intoxication. On July 28th witness thought the thefts were committed under the influence of drink, but later arrived at the conclusion that the articles had been deliberately stolen.

Marrie Vissett, a nurse, said when she arrived at the Highlands on July 28th the prisoner was not in a fit condition to look after herself or her patient. In the first part of the night she was very excited, but she became quieter in the morning. There was no doubt that the prisoner was intoxicated.

P.-S. Brotheridge said he went to Paddington Green Police Station on August 3rd and received prisoner into custody. On searching her rooms he found 21 pawn tickets, and under the bed eight pint and one half pint empty whiskey and brandy

bottles. There were also several empty eau de Cologne flasks, and the room smelt very strongly of spirits.

Supt. Biggs gave evidence as to charging the prisoner on July 31st with stealing certain articles. Witness told her that she would also probably be charged with forging testimonials, and she replied, "You will find the originals in my bag." Then witness told her that she would probably be charged with being a habitual drunkard, as she had been in one or two inebriate homes.

On cross-examination, he said that the prisoner had lost all her situations. Unquestionably her downfall was due to excessive drinking, and even her own mother had cast her off.

Prisoner pleaded "Not guilty," and was committed for trial at the next Gloucestershire Quarter Sessions.

## A DEFENCELESS PUBLIC.

At Feltham Police Court, on Monday, August 9th, Alice Woodley was charged on remand with stealing from a bedroom at Halliford House Asylum, Sunbury, a marked shilling; further, with stealing between July 1st and 28th, 5½ lbs. of sugar, 1 lb. tea, nine cigars, and eight night-lights, value 10s., the property of Dr. W. H. Haslett. The accused was further charged with stealing three brooches, value £2. The Chairman thought it scarcely necessary to proceed with the second charge, but Dr. Haslett said he had no desire to withdraw it.

Dr. Haslett said that suspicion rested at first on one of the other nurses, who was given a month's notice and sent to Bournemouth with some of the other patients. The thefts, however, continued, and his suspicions of that particular nurse were entirely removed. The prisoner knew the nurse was being dismissed.

Detective-Sergeant Brown gave evidence as to identifying the marked shilling in the prisoner's purse, and her admission of having stolen it. She had a salary of £22 a year.

Miss Ellen C. Crush, Matron at Halliford House, gave evidence as to brooches mentioned in the second charge being found under the mats, and one in the prisoner's pocket. There were three day and one night nurse at the home for fifteen patients.

Mr. Firth admitted that the accused had stolen the brooches, but contended that her lapse was due to overwork. He asked the Bench to bind the accused over.

In binding her over in £25 to be of good behaviour for twelve months, the Chairman said the justices were taking a lenient view, as this was a first offence. The most serious aspect of the case was that suspicion had rested on another nurse whose character and future might have been ruined.

The public will note that a nurse under dismissal for suspected theft was sent to Bournemouth in charge of patients, that one convicted of theft is still able to undertake the care of private patients with impunity; and that failing a system of State registration there is no system by which such a nurse can be removed from the recognised ranks of the nursing profession.

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