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## Editorial.

### THEFTS FROM HOSPITALS.

There are probably few large hospitals in London which have not been troubled by thefts from the Nurses' Home, or Matron's Quarters and Sisters' rooms, thefts committed in so clever a manner as to baffle detection, and to indicate that the culprit is not a petty pilferer, who has succumbed to sudden temptation, but an expert thief.

We record in another column the conviction of a former probationer, who pleaded guilty to stealing a number of articles from the Nurses' Home at a London Hospital. It was urged in her defence that the prisoner, who was highly connected, had since her childhood given her relatives anxiety as to her mental capacity, and suffered greatly from headaches. It was an argument which could justly be brought forward against her adopting so exacting and responsible a profession as nursing, but not one to absolve her from responsibility for her actions, or from the legal consequences of her wrong doing. We are glad that Sir Marcus Samuel, before whom the accused was brought, held this view, for when thefts occur in a hospital, suspicion falls on a number of innocent persons, scrubbers, cleaners, and others, whose means of earning their daily bread is thus endangered, and when guilt is brought home to the culprit it is right that punishment should follow, and that the innocent should be vindicated. As a matter of fact the thief is seldom one of those hard workers, but someone in nursing uniform, perhaps a probationer whose desire to train as a nurse is subsidiary to her desire to have the run of the Nurses' Home for her own purposes, or it may be a nurse's friend, who by this means obtain access to the Home, and is able to visit it and pass in and out unsuspected.

And there is nothing more surprising than the ease with which it is possible to obtain admission to a Nurses' Home, including the Matron's Quarters. We know, from personal experience, that it is only necessary to ask for the Matron of a hospital to be told in many instances by the porter in the main entrance to take such and such a direction, indicating, at the same time, the position of the Matron's door. Arrived there, the door may or may not be ajar, the Matron in or out of her room, but our point is that, with the utmost facility, undesirable persons may be officially informed of the position of the Matron's Quarters, may without let or hindrance wander about the Home until they arrive there, and, if so inclined, have ample opportunity to annex property before they arrive there, and, if the Matron is not in her office, to take possession of it, investigate its contents, and abstract what they desire, at leisure, the valid excuse when found in possession being that they were directed there by an official of the institution. In our opinion the service in many hospitals needs re-organisation so far as access to the Matron is concerned, and entrance to the Nurses' Quarters or Home should also be much more strictly supervised than at present. It is poor economy to stint service in this respect, when the result may be the loss of valuable property, as well as the annoyance caused to the nursing staff by the insecurity of their property, besides the blame, and perhaps the unjust discharge of innocent persons upon whom suspicion has wrongfully fallen.

In poor-law infirmaries some check is placed upon the admission of unauthorised persons as their names, and the person they desire to visit, are taken at the gate, but access to general hospitals is as a rule extraordinarily simple.

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