

in such a way as to show that she was aiding and abetting her mode of life.

Mr. Herbert Muskett prosecuting for the Commissioner of the Police, said that the defendant advertised her premises amongst other things for massage, Swedish exercises and manicure, but it was said that no legitimate business was carried on.

Mr. George Elliott, K.C., who defended, stated that he should not resist the charge of keeping a brothel, but drew attention to the relative ages of the defendant and of the woman whose movements she was said to control.

Our reason for drawing attention to this unsavoury case is that it was stated by one witness that a woman dressed as a nurse was paid £1 a week to sit at the door and receive people who called. Considering that it was admitted the house was a brothel, this adoption of the uniform of the trained nurse is an intolerable outrage.

#### ACTION AGAINST LORD BALFOUR OF BURLEIGH.

The Second Division of the Court of Session, Edinburgh, on Saturday, decided that the action by Elizabeth Birnie Couper, Matron of Clackmannan Combination Infectious Diseases Hospital, Alloa, against Lord Balfour of Burleigh for £2,000 damages for alleged slander should go to trial by jury. The statements complained of were in letters written by the defender regarding alleged mismanagement in the hospital.

An earlier action was dismissed on the ground that the communications complained of were privileged.

In this, the second action, the pursuer produced further letters, and on these as well as on the letters produced in the first case she based her complaint. In announcing the decision of the Court Lord Dundas said that the pursuer had made averments which, if substantiated would be relevant to infer malice. He did not however, disguise his impression that the pursuer would have the greatest difficulty in proving them.

#### NURSE SUES EMPLOYER.

An action has been brought by Miss Mary Reid, a trained nurse, holding good certificates and credentials, against her employer, Mr. Oscar Cupper, of Hanover Gate Mansions, for damages for alleged assault, imprisonment, and wrongful dismissal. The action was tried in the King's Bench Division on December 5th and 6th. The plaintiff alleged that she was engaged as a companion to Mrs. Cupper and nurse to her little girl of two and a-half. The place was not as represented, and she gave notice to leave. She alleged that on May 23rd last the defendant struck her in the face, seized her by the wrist, threw her against a wardrobe, and then locked her in a room. The defendant denied the assault and pleaded that the dismissal was justified.

After ninety minutes' deliberation the jury failed to agree and were discharged.

#### ROYAL COMMISSION ON VENEREAL DISEASES.

At the sixth meeting of the Royal Commission, which was held on the 1st instant, evidence was given by Dr. Burnett Ham, who from 1909 until this year was head of the Health Department in the State of Victoria, describing the measures which have recently been taken in connection with venereal diseases in that State.

In 1908, at the meeting of the Australian Medical Congress the following resolution was passed:

"That syphilis is responsible for an enormous amount of damage to mankind and that preventive and remedial measures directed against it are worthy of the utmost consideration."

Following upon this resolution a deputation waited upon the Premier of Victoria in 1909 to urge the consideration of this matter, and, as a consequence, Dr. Ham was directed to draw up a scheme for the investigation of the subject and an advisory committee consisting of the leading medical men and women in Melbourne was appointed to act with him.

As a first step to ascertain the facts as precisely as possible it was decided to make syphilis a compulsorily notifiable disease in the Melbourne metropolitan area. In actual practice the compulsory nature of the notification was not insisted upon as no penalties for failure to notify were enforced, but it was felt that unless an official flavour were given to the requirement to notify the response from the medical practitioners would be but small. There was at first some opposition on the part of the medical profession to the proposed notification but this was to some extent removed when it was made clear that the notification was to be impersonal, that no names were to be given, and that consequently no administrative action could be taken on the notification so far as the patient was concerned.

As a matter of fact during the year in which the notification order was in force only 110 out of the 350 to 400 practitioners in the metropolitan area actually notified cases. Thus the measure adopted was not compulsory notification as ordinarily understood but rather an experiment made with a view to ascertaining the amount of syphilis in the City. In connection with the notification arrangements a circular was issued to medical practitioners explaining the kind of cases they were expected to notify, and the doctors were also asked to supply with each notification a sample of the patient's blood for the purpose of testing by the Wassermann reaction.

In the course of a year, 5,500 notifications were made and an equal number of samples of blood submitted: 3,500 of these notifications were made by private practitioners, 900 by the Melbourne Hospital, and 1,100 by the Eye and Ear Hospital. Of the 5,500 Wassermann tests for syphilis which were carried out 1,900 gave positive and 400

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)