

MORTUARIES.

The time is within the memory of most nurses when hospital mortuaries were places that were shunned and rarely visited; indeed, nurses frequently passed through the whole of their training without ever being inside the hospital mortuary at all, while no visitor to the hospital was ever taken there, the reason of course being

for a pall, a sight altogether so gruesome that it was no uncommon thing, especially in the medical wards, for several other deaths to follow in quick succession.

It is perhaps natural that in our hospitals the mortuaries, which are always out of sight, should be the last department to be reformed. But there were other reasons. The mortuaries were out of the Matron's province, and the average

hospital porter, though he may be a man of many excellences, has seldom the instinct or desire to transform a bare, whitewashed mortuary—furnished with trestles and shells. Such mortuaries were terrible places, which depressed and horrified instead of comforting the mourners, and indeed were a disgrace to all concerned, even if hygienically clean, though this was by no means always the case.

But when the Matrons began to consider the question of mortuaries and to claim that they should be in charge of the nursing staff, a change for the better became slowly apparent—slowly, because there was little money available for beautifying them, nor did committees see the need for expenditure in this direction. The writer well remembers that, when she visited many of the London mortuaries nineteen years ago, in one case the washhouse was used as the mortuary. In another the only place where relatives could see the bodies of their deceased friends was on the table of the post-mortem room. In yet a third the bodies were kept in numbered



THE NEW MORTUARY CHAPEL, THE ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL.

that the mortuary was a squalid, unlovely place, lacking the softening influence of woman, the refinement of art, the beauty of holiness. The dead, who up to the moment of the loosening of the silver cord had had every care and tenderness lavished upon them, were moved from the wards in the commonest shells, on the shoulders of stalwart porters, a bit of old serge doing duty

pigeon holes and run out should the relatives wish to see them, while in a fourth the sole coverings of the lidless shells were white dustsheets, and however many shells, occupied and empty, were lying in the mortuary the relatives of one patient must perforce see them all.

Contrast this with the really beautiful mortuary chapels now to be found at many of our hospitals,

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