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## EDITORIAL.

### TESTIMONIALS BY TELEPHONE.

“IT LOOKS LIKE A DANGEROUS CONSPIRACY.”

A richly deserved sentence of four months' hard labour was passed by Mr. Hay Halkett at the Marylebone Police Court, on March 6th, on Hilda Hartley, described as a nurse, of 38, Compagne Gardens, West Hampstead, for stealing a fox fur, two dresses, and other clothing, valued at £15, the property of Miss Cufal, residing at 48, Fitzjohn's Avenue, Hampstead. A further charge against her under the Servants' Characters Act, 1792, was dropped, of falsely pretending to have served as a nurse at the General Hospital, Nottingham, when entering the service of Miss Edith Wyvill, Matron of a Nursing Home. Why consider a charge under an Act more than 200 years old, before trained nursing was a profession, when it was stated in evidence that this criminal was engaged “as a registered and fully trained nurse,” which, if proved, brings her under the penal clauses of the Nurses' Registration Act, 1919, and “liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding in the case of a first offence ten pounds, and in the case of a second or any subsequent offence fifty pounds.”

We draw attention to this case because there are several points connected with it of great importance both to the public and to registered nurses.

First there is the ease with which criminals who have done time can still gain an entrance into private houses. The loss occasioned by the theft is the least important aspect of the case. That which most impresses us is that a thief, known as such to the police, should have been sent to nurse and take responsible charge of a sick person. It is a strong argument in favour of the compulsory registration of nurses.

Next there is the evidence on which this thief was accepted as a member of the staff of the Nursing Home above referred to.

It was stated in court that “the accused was engaged by Miss Wyvill as a registered and fully trained nurse, and received £60 a year and her food.” Thus the first line of defence for the Superintendent of the Home and the public was the State Register of Nurses. While, of course, it is unquestionably true that the published Register available is not up-to-date, reference to the Registrar of the General Nursing Council at 12, York Gate, N.W., would have proved or disproved

the fact of registration, and, happily also, the Nursing School in which she received her training. Apparently, however, the *ex parte* statement from the applicant was taken on trust.

Next, Hilda Hartley gave as a reference a Miss G. Roberts of Bentinck Street, and a telephone message was received from a person answering to that name stating that “Nurse Hartley” had been at her Nursing Home in Torquay for eighteen months, that she was a thoroughly good nurse who had been trained at Nottingham. (As the Magistrate's Clerk remarked: “It looks like a dangerous conspiracy.”)

On this statement, made by telephone, and presumably unverified by any means whatever, “Nurse Hartley” appears to have been engaged by the Superintendent of the Home, and subsequently sent out to nurse an old lady, with the result above chronicled.

The whole of the missing property was subsequently found by Detective-Sergeant Gresty in her locked trunk at the Home. When arrested by him at a hospital at Neasden, she was “wearing the complete uniform of a nurse.” (When are trained nurses to have the protected and Registered uniform to which the Nurses' Registration Act, 1919, entitles them?) Detective Gresty stated further that the prisoner was sentenced to six weeks' hard labour at Nottingham in July, 1921, for stealing a gold cross while acting as a nurse.

The magistrate, on the prisoner's admission that she had not trained at the Nottingham General Hospital, and hearing that she was not known at the address she gave in Bentinck Street, sentenced her, as above stated, to four months' hard labour.

What is the General Nursing Council doing to repudiate the claim of this criminal to be a Registered Nurse, and to protect the honour of Registered Nurses? We have seen no official statement whatever in any public newspaper, and certainly we ourselves have not been invited by the General Nursing Council to repudiate it.

It is time someone in its office protected the interests of the Registered Nurses, but, alas! under the present dispensation this is indeed a forlorn hope.

Further, we most unhesitatingly condemn the irresponsible method by which this thief was able to gain admission, in a confidential position as a nurse, to a private house.

It is the duty of every person who sends out private nurses to investigate claims as to training, to personally scrutinise original certificates and testimonials, and to verify credentials, before employing a nurse; and to engage one on information received over the telephone appears to us a grave dereliction of professional duty.

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