

case. The theatre sister who counted the instruments and swabs after Mr. Miles' operation has, unfortunately, died since, but Miss Sarah Jane Kingman, a State Registered Nurse, present at the operation, testified this had been done.

A vital question for nurses is, who is responsible for the counting if such an accident occurs, the surgeon or the theatre sister or nurse? We agree with Sir Thomas Horder (one of the witnesses) that the surgeon is ultimately responsible, but there has never been a legal decision in this country on this point, and it might be adverse to the nurse. In that event, what would be her position?

The jury found that it had not been established that the forceps had been left in the plaintiff's body in the course of the operation performed by the defendant, and the Lord Chief Justice entered judgment for him with costs.

Mr. Miles' defence was undertaken by the Medical Defence Union through their solicitors, Messrs. Hempson. How many nurses would have similar protection if called upon to defend themselves in such an action?

The British College of Nurses, under certain conditions, undertakes the legal defence of its Fellows and Members, and this is a strong reason for joining the College, information concerning which can be obtained from the Secretary, at 39, Portland Place, London, W.1.

#### A BABY DROWNED IN A BATH.

The terrible tragedy of a baby 18 months old being drowned in a bath at the Princess Louise Hospital for Children, North Kensington, W., was the subject of an inquest by Mr. Oswald, the Kensington Coroner, on March 11th.

Evidence was given by three members of the Nursing Staff, Miss Mary Adderley, temporary staff nurse; Miss Eileen Mary Pearson, and Miss Mary Ann Smith, V.A.D.

Miss Pearson deposed that she had just put the child in the bath when a V.A.D. nurse told her that the staff nurse wanted her urgently. She said to the V.A.D. nurse "Watch it," and the V.A.D. nurse replied "Yes." She (Nurse Pearson) understood that the V.A.D. was going to finish bathing him. After seeing the staff nurse and carrying out her message she went off to tea. When she went to the ward again after tea the child was dead.

Miss Mary Ann Smith said she was a V.A.D. nurse at the hospital. She was in the kitchen, filling a hot water bottle, when she heard a remark which sounded like "Maurice and the bath." Having filled the bottle she went to the bathroom and saw the child lying on his side dead in the bath under the water.

The Coroner said "the nurses contradicted each other's statements. There has either been some contradiction of orders, or someone is telling deliberate falsehoods."

He recorded a verdict of "Accidental death," saying it was difficult to attach the blame to any individual.

Blame, however, there certainly is for the slackness and carelessness which resulted in a baby being left alone in a bath to drown, while a nurse was having her tea, and a V.A.D. was filling a hot water bottle in a kitchen near by. We wonder what the baby's parents think about it.

We note that the name of neither nurse appears on the Register of Nurses for 1929, and it is not apparent whether the V.A.D. who is stated by Nurse Pearson to have taken her a message that the staff nurse wanted her urgently was the V.A.D. who was filling the hot water bottle in the kitchen. The employment of V.A.D. in many departments of nursing—hospitals, ante-natal clinics, massage departments, etc., is not only unfair to Registered Nurses, but to the public.

We hope that H.R.H. Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, Patron of the Hospital, will desire to be informed as to the circumstances of this case.

#### THE ACTS OF RAHERE.

In times past, the miracle play played a great part in the education of simple people who could neither read nor write, and to-day gentle and simple who have seen "The Acts of Rahere," by Miss E. Werge-Orani, an adaptation from a 12th century manuscript, and now being played daily with reverent devotion in the Church of St. Bartholomew-the-Great, West Smithfield, will realise as never before the wonder and the beauty of the story of the witty King's Jester, who left the Court of Henry I to become an Augustinian monk, and made a pilgrimage to Rome.

Grievously ill, he vowed that if he recovered he would "build unto the glory of God a Hospital for all such as need healing of their diseases," and St. Bartholomew appeared to him bidding him build his Hospital, and a Priory Church beside it, on a site chosen by the saint, "near by London, in a place called the Smoothfield, that is now barren, but shall be made into a Garden of the Most High, by the watering of thy penitent tears."

The thrill of this wonder play is that it is all true. We are seeing it—listening to it—in the magnificent Priory Church built by Rahere in obedience to the heavenly vision, with its three tiers of arches—build it high, he was counselled, so that there may be room for the angels.

Before the play begins, there is a short address from the Rector, who draws attention to the Tomb of Rahere, to the right of the Sanctuary, looking down the Church. A well-known feature. What, perhaps, is not so well known is that his body has never been interred, and his remains are immediately beneath the Tomb. At the feet of the full length effigy of Rahere, lying on the Tomb, are two miniature monks supporting tablets. The inscription upon the parchment is defaced and worn, but legible, and, as the Rector holds, appropriate:—

"For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wildernesses like Eden and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness, shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."

It is on the waste place of the Smoothfield that the Church of St. Bartholomew-the-Great is built, for Rahere discovered that the ground whereon St. Bartholomew bade him build his Hospital, and a Priory Church beside it, is "the King's land, a part of the King's market at Smoothfield. The place by the hanging ground."

Rahere, entering the Smithfield Market with other of his brethren, learns that the King is shortly expected to pass that way, and we see him in earnest prayer that his petition may be granted. The third scene of the Pageant shows us Rahere, the simple Augustinian monk, kneeling before the King (Henry I), and crying: "A boon, a boon, Lord King," and the King grants it, and more than the "poor offering" sought from him. "We will help the building with our favour, our good will and our protection."

In the fifth scene is presented to us the dedication of Rahere's church, with solemn ritual, the King bearing the "Charter of Foundation," the Canons the offerings of the Congregation, and the townsfolk with lighted tapers in their hands.

So closes for us the story of a marvellous, almost miraculous achievement. That the church and hospital should have been conceived and brought to completion, in the life-time of one man, is almost incredible. But it is an historical fact, and the neat nurses, in immaculate uniform, from Rahere's Hospital (St. Bartholomew's), near by—whose privilege it is to act as stewards in the Pageant—are the direct successors of those Augustinian monks, who, if not so immaculate as to clothing, have bequeathed to the nursing staff the traditions and inspiration of devotion to the sick, which it is their pride to maintain wherever duty may call them.

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