

from a West End store. She pleaded guilty, and was sentenced to one month's imprisonment in the second division for larceny. She appealed against this sentence at the County of London Appeal Sessions on August 8th, and the sentence was reduced by Mr. Wilberforce, Deputy Chairman. Miss Ashburner was bound over in the sum of £5 to come up for judgment if called upon within twelve months, and was directed to pay the cost of the appeal.

The Chairman asked Miss Ashburner whether she admitted taking the dress, and she replied that she admitted taking the dress, but she did not mean to steal it.

Witnesses who appeared on behalf of Miss Ashburner were then heard. The first was the Chairman of the Wembley Hospital, who is a J.P., who said that the Committee felt that an appeal should be put in, and the Secretary of the Hospital stood surety for Miss Ashburner.

The speaker said Miss Ashburner had given satisfaction to the authorities of the Wembley Hospital, and was in sole charge of it in the Matron's absence. He recognised the offence as a serious one, but in being bound over she would have an opportunity of retrieving her character.

The Matron of the hospital said that she very much felt her responsibility in this matter, because on the day in question Miss Ashburner did not wish to go up to town, and she persuaded her to do so, as she was tired, and she thought it might do her good.

She herself went up to town the following day with Miss Ashburner, who was advised by the solicitor for the shop, and by the police to plead guilty, and did so.

Miss Ashburner, in a letter addressed to the Registrar, which was read, expressed regret that any action of hers should bring disgrace upon the nursing profession, and then entered into the circumstances of the case, and how she walked upstairs with the dress under her costume coat. When spoken to she offered to pay for it, and when payment was refused, the horror of the position in which she had placed herself forced itself upon her.

#### DECISION OF THE COUNCIL.

The Council having deliberated *in camera*, Miss Ashburner, on being recalled, was informed by the Chairman that the Council had considered her case very carefully, and the evidence given, and had decided that judgment should be deferred. She should keep in touch with the Registrar, and Miss Riddell would tell her how this should be done.

The following Resolution was passed by the Council:—  
"That judgment in the case of Miss Elizabeth Ashburner, S.R.N., be deferred till the Meeting of this Council a year hence."

### POINTS TO NOTE AND REMEMBER.

#### DEGRADATION OF THE NURSES' REGISTER.

Once again the General Nursing Council for England and Wales have failed in their duty to the public and to the Nursing Profession in retaining on the Register of Nurses the names of two Nurses proved guilty of theft, by their own admission, in Courts of Law. In one case, after judgment had been deferred for a year, in the other the same course was adopted, and judgment will be passed a year hence.

In our opinion the initial mistake of the Council was to virtually try the cases again when these nurses had been found guilty of theft in a Court of Law. The guilt is a settled fact. The action of the Council should therefore be restricted to the consideration of whether theft is or is not a sufficiently serious offence to make it their duty to remove the name of the offenders from the Register. We contend that the name of every nurse proved guilty of theft should *ipso facto* be removed from the Register. It would then be for her after a specified time to apply

for restoration to the Register on affording proof of good conduct. The Council have taken in these instances the opposite course and retained the names on the Register, thus covering criminals.

When a case which comes under the disciplinary powers of the Council is reported to it direct, then it is its duty to take, sift and weigh evidence.

The next point to which we wish to draw attention is that the supervision given to Miss Margaret Ellen Owen on probation was inadequate and worthless. One Matron who wrote that her conduct had been "most satisfactory during the past year" admitted that she had not seen her since she left the hospital, and the clergyman she deputed to "watch over her" reported that she was of "good and irreproachable character" and "of undoubted moral worth."

Then we have been shocked to know that this nurse whilst on probation has been admitted to the Birkenhead Maternity Hospital for training for the Certificate of the Central Midwives Board. Who gave her the necessary references?

Concerning the second case, that of Miss Elizabeth Hunter Ashburner, a serious statement was made by the Chairman of the Wembley Hospital to the General Nursing Council that in the absence of the Matron this Sister was left in sole charge of the hospital. We are of opinion that the Committee of Management of the Wembley Hospital are entirely unjustified in placing her in such a position of responsibility under the circumstances.

This Sister on being informed that judgment would be deferred for a year has been directed to keep in touch with the Registrar during her year of probation. Surely it never was contemplated that the Registrar of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales should have added to her duties that of the Matron of a Penitentiary!

#### IS THY SERVANT A DOG.

In the name of the Nurses' Organizations which had the courage to express to their Governing Body, the General Nursing Council, by letter and resolution the indignation felt by their members at being associated on the State Register with an increasing number of shop-lifting thieves, we enter a strong public protest against the attitude of Dr. John Buchan upon the reception of these communications by the General Nursing Council. Dr. Buchan said he hoped that "in replying to the letters the Council would make it quite clear that they were not going to enter into any discussion on a matter which was entirely their own province."

We would remind Dr. Buchan whose attitude is intolerable on this occasion towards the members of a profession he helps to control, that thousands of Registered Nurses decline to accept his assumption that they have no right to address the General Nursing Council if, in their expert opinion, they consider it has failed in its public and professional duty.

The passing of the Nurses' Registration Act emancipated the members of the Nursing Profession from a condition of servitude, and placed upon them the duty of corporate professional responsibility.

At the same time it must be noted that the Registered Nurse-Members on the Council are primarily responsible for lack of discipline, as they are in a substantial majority. The General Nursing Council is not a private benevolent society, but its duty is to administer justice that the public safety may be maintained, and the honour of the Nursing Profession upheld.

Lastly, the only effective reparation transgressors can make who write sentimental letters to the General Nursing Council, expressing their devotion to its interests, is to remove their names from the State Register and thus help to maintain its moral standard.

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