

Johnson v. Johnson (by her guardian).

This was a petition for divorce on the ground of adultery, the respondent being of unsound mind. She was represented by a guardian, appointed by Justice Gorell Barnes, for the purposes of the suit.

The PRESIDENT in delivering judgment said that proceedings for divorce might be instituted against a lunatic, and the Court had no hesitation in finding that this person had committed adultery. She had been pronounced incurable for many years, and the petitioner had preferred to wait for relief until his wife's death, which had been expected. Notwithstanding the long delay in instituting proceedings the President pronounced decree *nisi*.—*Times*, April 20th.

Prosecution by the Lunacy Commissioners.

At the Warwick Quarter Sessions, last April, Mrs. A. W. Buchanan, of Rugby, pleaded guilty to unlawfully applying mechanical means of bodily restraint to her insane daughter. The prosecution was undertaken by the Lunacy Commissioners. There were further charges against the defendant of ill-treating her daughter, but these were not proceeded with after the admission of the first offence. The counsel for the prosecution said he quite believed the defendant's statement, that she did not really intend to do her daughter any harm or ill-treat her in any way. Nevertheless she had infringed the Act of Parliament, and the Lunacy Commissioners felt that the time had come when those who undertook the responsibility of detaining persons of unsound mind must familiarise themselves with the regulations. The Chairman, Mr. Dugdale, K.C., in giving the judgment of the court, said he could not quite agree that the defendant had only erred in a technical way. He thought there was a good deal of something approaching very nearly to cruel treatment of the unfortunate daughter. The magistrates, however, were favourably impressed by the fact that the mother did not appear to have lost the daughter's affection, and under the circumstances they did not think it necessary to inflict a sentence of imprisonment. A fine of £20 was imposed.

Sequel to a Lunacy Inquiry.

A Douglas boarding-house keeper was lately discharged from the Isle of Man Asylum, upon the finding of a jury of Inquiry who declared that she was of sound mind. She sought refuge with a Mr. Fielding, at whose instance the inquiry was instituted. In the course of the day Mr. Fielding became alarmed as to her condition, and communicated with the police. She was examined by the police surgeon, and, on his certificate, was again placed in the asylum.

PARLIAMENTARY NEWS.

HOUSE OF LORDS, *May 9th.*—LUNACY (IRELAND) BILL.

On the order for the second reading,

Lord ASHBOURNE said this bill proposes to introduce a certain number of amendments into the Lunacy Laws of Ireland, the great proportion of which are already in operation in England. The first of the clauses proposes to give to the Lord Lieutenant the power to conditionally release a criminal lunatic. In Ireland we have felt the want of that power, because the criminal lunatic, during his detention at the pleasure of the Lord Lieutenant, can only be released absolutely without conditions, and that sometimes leads to difficulties, as the risk must be run, which is obvious, of absolute discharge. There are further certain amendments to provisions relating to criminals and dangerous lunatics which must be treated as privileged, subject to the consent of the House of Commons. A further important provision in the bill is the extension in Ireland of the jurisdiction over lunatics, an extension which has for years been in full operation in England. At present the whole jurisdiction is vested in the Lord Chancellor, and the amount of work involved is heavy. By the Act passed for England some years ago, the powers of the Lord Chancellor are shared in respect of criminal lunatics by the judges of the Supreme Court, such as the Master of the Rolls and the Lord Chief Justice. That works with obvious advantage, for the Lord Chancellor has sufficient help to discharge the onerous duty of this part of his jurisdiction, and the bill proposes to enable the Sovereign in Ireland as in England to give power also to

judges of the Supreme Court, such as the Master of the Rolls and the Lord Chief Justice, to perform the duties entrusted to the Lord Chancellor in conjunction with him, so far as these lunatics are concerned. These, I think, are the only clauses which alter the existing law.

The bill was read a second time without division or debate.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, May 11th.—STATE INEBRIATE REFORMATORIES.

The Home Secretary informed Mr. Cremer that he had already given his approval to plans for State inebriate reformatories for both men and women, and that the work would be proceeded with as quickly as possible. He hoped that temporary arrangements for the reception of women would be completed in three months.

HOUSE OF LORDS, May 17th.—THE HABITUAL DRUNKARDS BILL.

Introduced by the Bishop of Winchester, and carried through a second reading some two months ago, the bill has now been transformed into a new measure by the amendments of the Government in committee. Only about four and a half lines of the original bill were left after the committee stage. Both Lord Cross and Lord Spencer pointed out the unusual and inconvenient course which had been taken, and Lord Salisbury defended the wholesale amendment of the bill as a convenient plan for dealing with the subject. The first clause had five words left, and this was made to read in conformity with the Inebriates Act of 1898, so as to make no new definition of "habitual drunkard." The effect of the amended clause left it to the discretion of the police to serve notices of prohibition of the sale of intoxicants on the licence holders, and limited it to on-licence holders. The bill originally contemplated a penalty for the publican who served the liquor, while as amended it provides for a penalty for the habitual drunkard also. In the second clause the protection for the wife of the habitual drunkard was extended, so as to include protection for a husband against a wife who was an habitual drunkard. The third clause, which provided for a penalty for being drunk while in charge of a child under six, was amended so as to raise the age to seven years, and made the penalty forty shillings or a month's imprisonment with or without hard labour. Clause 4 was altered so as to provide for the registration of offences under the Act by the clerk of the licensing justices in a special register, and a new clause was added to provide for the apprehension of a person found drunk in a public place, and requiring a person convicted of drunkenness to give security for good behaviour, in addition to or substitution for any other penalty. At the end of the committee stage, before the bill was reported, Lord Salisbury agreed to make the bill a Government measure in the Commons after it had passed the Upper Chamber.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, May 24th.—THE INEBRIATES ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

Dr. Farquharson introduced this bill, which has been promoted by the British Medical Association, and backed among others by Sir F. S. Powell, Sir Walter Foster, Sir Michael Foster, and Dr. Thompson.

INEBRIATES AND LUNATICS.—July 22nd.

The withdrawal was announced of the Drunkards Bill and the Lunacy (Ireland) Bill.

THE SALE OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS TO CHILDREN.—August 3rd.

The bill to prevent the sale of intoxicating liquors to children is now altered very much in form. The limit of age stands at fourteen years instead of sixteen. Liquors sold or delivered in corked and sealed vessels in quantities not less than one reputed pint, for consumption off the premises, are excluded from the scope of the bill altogether, and the sender of the child is made equally punishable with the licence holder who sells or delivers the liquor to the child. The term "corked" is defined to mean closed with a plug or stopper, whether it is made of cork or wood or glass, or some other material, and "sealed" is defined as secured with any substance without the destruction of which the cork, plug, or stopper cannot be withdrawn.