the notification of the child. Local education authorities are instructed to notify to the local authority under the 1913 Act the name and address of any mentally defective child who, on or before attaining the age of 16, is about to be withdrawn or discharged from a special school or class, and in whose case the education authority is of opinion that it would be to his benefit to be placed under supervision or guardianship or sent to an institution. The parents of children affected by the regulations must, it is laid down, be informed by the education authority of any action it is proposed to take in this connexion.

Following-up by Almoners' Departments.

The report of the lady almoner of the Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital, Moorfields, on the work of the social service department during 1927, contains an interesting account of an investigation into the results of sending certain children to the Metropolitan Asylums Board's Ophthalmic Schools at Swanley. During the years 1924 and 1925, fifty children, suffering from diseases of the cornea, conjunctiva, and eyelids, were transferred from Moorfields to Swanley. Only twelve of these children had been ill for less than six months, and some had been out-patients for years. The average stay at Swanley was seven months. After allowing a year to elapse, the almoner had each patient visited at home. It was found that 70 per cent. of the patients had been cured by one period of residence at Swanley; 8 per cent. relapsed but were cured by a second course; 16 per cent. relapsed after three to eight months, and underwent further prolonged treatment at hospital; three of the fifty were still at Swanley at the end of 1927. Such well-organized following-up of cases by almoners' departments would be of great value in other directions, such as some surgical procedures, and tuberculosis. These departments are particularly well fitted to undertake inquiries of this nature.

Ireland.

Fermanagh County Hospital.

THE committee of the Fermanagh County Hospital received recently a deputation from the county Fermanagh medical practitioners. Dr. Leonard Kidd, medical officer of the county hospital, stated that the hospital committee had received a letter from the Ministry of Home Affairs asking for comment on a letter of complaint which had been received to the effect that deaths of mothers and children had occurred for want of proper provision being made for their care and nursing. Dr. Kidd remarked that this allegation was serious. He had read recently that the total sum spent by the district councils in Fermanagh on maternity and child welfare was £120, a very inadequate sum for the care of the fathers and mothers of to-morrow, the makers of the nation to come, in comparison with the amount spent on the care of bees and hens, on sheep dipping, on the proper raising of turnips and carrots, and the prevention of weeds. Maternity wards were urgently necessary; there was no place in the county for a woman requiring obstetrical treatment in an institution unless she became a pauper and went to the workhouse. Such a problem in Fermanagh was much more important than raising money for the provision of maternity wards in Belfast. Dr. Kidd added that some of them might live to see the putting into force of the Poor Law Commission's report, but in the past many commissions' reports had been only noted and pigeon-holed. He had authority for saying that the Northern Government, which had received the commission's report seven months previously, had now appointed another commission to examine it and to advise the Government. A special committee was appointed to consider the question raised by Dr. Kidd.

A Hospital Patient's Injury.

Judge Wakely, in the Circuit Court last May, awarded £60 in the case of Mary Mulrennan, a minor suing through her father, against the Board of Health, King's County. The action had been brought to recover damages for personal injuries sustained by the minor plaintiff while under treatment in the hospital at Tullamore for appendicitis; one of her feet, it was alleged, had been burned by a hot-water bottle placed in her bed by a convalescent patient while the plaintiff was in an unconscious condition following a successful operation. The County Health Board appealed against the decision of Judge Wakely and a reserved judgement was delivered, dismissing the appeal by a majority (Mr. Justice FitzGibbon dissenting). The Chief Justice, delivering his own judgement and that of Mr. Justice Murnaghan, said that arrangements were made to admit the plaintiff to the hospital, an agreement being come to whereby she was to pay 4s. a week. The jury found that the defendants were guilty of negligence or breach of duty in the care and maintenance of the patient, and that the negligence was by reason of an insufficient staff. In their opinion, the jury were entitled on the evidence to hold that the hot-water bottle was negligently placed in the patient's bed, and that the absence of nurses, due to an insufficient staff, was the cause of the injury. Considering the legal consequences that followed from these facts in regard to the powers and duties of the defendants, the Chief Justice said that the plaintiff was not in the position of a pauper or poor person eligible to receive treatment as provided by the legislation giving sanction to the county scheme. The jury found that the plaintiff was received under contract to be cared for and maintained, and the Board of Health was empowered to contract for the admission of paying patients in the county home, subject to such regulations and conditions as might be approved by the Minister. The defendants had not made any allegation that they had exceeded their powers by entering into the contract or that at the time of the bargain they had exempted themselves from providing proper treatment and accommodation. At the trial of the action the defendants sought to make the case that the plaintiff must establish a statutory duty on the defendants to have sufficient nurses. For the reasons that he had stated, the duty was not a statutory duty, but was based upon express contract; there was abundance of evidence that the contract was broken, and in their opinion the appeal should be dismissed. Mr. Justice FitzGibbon, in his judgement, said that he could not accept the view of the facts or the law as stated in the case. The staff of the hospital had been approved by the Minister, and the defendants had no power to exceed it. There was no suggestion that the attendants were not properly qualified, and, in his opinion, the defendants had no power to contract that they would supply at the expense of the ratepayers a greater measure of accommodation to a paying patient than they had power to supply to poor persons. He could see no ground for awarding damages in this case. In his opinion the action should be dismissed.

Correspondence.

DISTRICT CO-ORDINATION OF HOSPITAL SERVICES.

SIR,—It seems an immense pity to start our campaign of co-ordination and unification of hospital services by insisting that one system is the better and must therefore put the other under its heel—would it not be preferable to seek at once both the spirit and method of co-operation? I write to suggest a method which, although local conditions will vary greatly, might have some application in one district or another, or at any rate which conveys what I think must be the right outlook.

We want to keep the voluntary hospitals—both large and small—and the spirit that animates them, but we need not look far to find great work done in State departments of medicine. We have also to remember that the clinical field will have to be adequately staffed wherever it may be—whether in a voluntary, county council, or Poor Law system. Let us suppose that the co-operation, or even unification, of hospital services is decided on for some more or less self-contained district or area—say, for example,