

enhanced if they saw that the health and comfort of the working classes were properly safeguarded. A working man was more likely to put energy into his daily task if he knew that his sick wife or children had the proper means of being restored to health. These means were being provided by the Ulster Hospital.

ROYAL NATIONAL HOSPITAL FOR CONSUMPTION FOR IRELAND.—This hospital, with His Majesty's permission, has adopted the prefix "Royal" to the corporate name. The hospital has now for several years been carrying on most excellent work in the treatment of poor consumptives on the open-air principle, and with results that bear comparison with those of any other sanatorium. There are at present sixty-seven beds, and the Board are adding a new wing for women patients, for whom additional accommodation is urgently needed.

### The Care of Infants.

A useful manual for mothers and nurses is "The Care of Infants," by Dr. Sophia Jex-Blake, late Dean of the Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women, and Lecturer on Midwifery for the University of Edinburgh. It is published by Mr. George A. Moreton, 42, George Street, Edinburgh, and by Messrs. Simpkin, Marshall and Co., Limited, London, in stiff covers, price 1s. net, or, bound in cloth gilt, 1s. 6d. net. The popularity of the book may be estimated by the fact that the first edition of 5,000 copies has been for some little time exhausted, so that the issue of a second and revised edition has been necessitated.

Dr. Jex-Blake, in her introduction, makes the startling statement—"familiar enough to the Registrar-General, but hardly realised as it should be by the general public—that nearly one-half of the whole population die under the age of five years. This enormous waste of life becomes," as she says, "simply appalling to those who realise, as medical practitioners can hardly fail to do, that the greater part of it depends on wholly preventable causes—in plain words, on ignorance and neglect. The great majority of these deaths could have been easily avoided by common care, combined with the most elementary knowledge of an infant's nature and needs; but, in the lower classes at least, these cases do not come under medical charge till a late, and frequently a hopeless, stage; and the poor mothers, overwhelmed, as they often are, with the heavy burden of their daily lives, may have treated their babies affectionately indeed, but with a crass ignorance which has been as fatal as intentional infanticide. Of the latter, alas! the doctors who work among the poor get but too many sad glimpses; and when Parliament has leisure to attend to the problems of life and death among the masses, it is to be hoped that an Act may be passed to render penal those ghoulis burial clubs in which babies are entered at a few weeks old, and from which the money is but too frequently quickly claimed."

The book deals in a thoroughly practical way with the management of the new-born infant, its food, its nursery, exercise and rest, clothing, bathing, vaccination, and minor ailments. It can safely be commended to all who wish to increase their knowledge of the much-neglected and all-important subject of the care of infants.

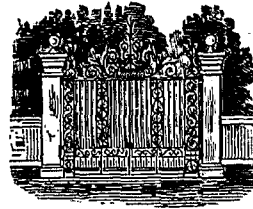
### Outside the Gates.

#### THE FLOWERS OF THE SEASON.

By MRS. C. CARMICHAEL STOPES.

#### CHAPTER XII.

#### DECEMBER.



Now that we have come to the last month of the year, one can hardly look for flowers. Yet under gloomy skies, and amid frosty winds, we have seen the Furze-bush break out in golden bloom, and amid the tall grass sheltering at its roots the pale Primrose opening in the hope of the spring. Under the hedge the blue Periwinkle begins to unroll its buds, and even until December survivals of autumn flowers may be found. A whole garden may be gathered in a dish from varied mosses, and Lichens gain a new interest by the departure of more charming rivals. The Scarlet Helvena, the Conferva, the red-cup Lichen, and the Peziza look all the brighter in contrast with the green. Food-berries for the birds still abound, as the haws and the Rose-hips; and in both woods and gardens have come to their perfection the scarlet berries of the Holly and the pale greenish globes of the Mistletoe. The very names of these plants call up dreams of youth and festal Christmases long gone by. It is one example of the strange persistence of ancient customs long after the original meaning has died out of them, our habit of decorating our houses and churches with Holly and Mistletoe at Christmas. To our Druidic ancestors the Mistletoe was a sacred plant, and their priestesses used to go to cut it with a silver knife at the full of the winter moons. Many incantations were associated with this parasite, which grows chiefly upon the Oak tree, though sometimes it grows upon old Apple trees and Poplars.

The Early Church made the best of customs it could not check, and not only the Romish priests but the Protestant clergy decorated their churches at Christmas time. All through the reign of Elizabeth the churchwardens of St. Margaret's, Westminster, spent 2s. 6d. every Christmas "for Holly and Mistletoe to deck the church withal." This was at a time when money was ten times as valuable as it is to-day, and when Holly and Mistletoe were much more accessible. The country came very near to the little London of Elizabeth's time. Hampstead was chiefly a wild heath, and Gipsy Hill a forest. So that the amount spent would be doubtless quite enough to decorate the church handsomely. Mistletoe has pale green leaves and small yellow flowers. The fruit is the translucent berry that contrasts so finely with the Holly. Thrushes, blackbirds, and ringdoves eat it. Birdlime is made of its viscous juice, and also a kind of glue. It used to be considered a poison, and was said to cause the tongue to become inflamed and swollen, the mind distraught and the strength of the heart and wits to fail." It is, even in small quantities, very constipating. Nevertheless, they used it externally with advantage to ripen and disperse swellings, and to clear stained nails. Another winter berry lingering still in mountainous or boggy places is the fruit of the Mountain Ash, or

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