

## The Small-pox Epidemic at Gloucester.

A CORRESPONDENT has kindly forwarded to us a photograph of one of the small-pox patients, taken during the recent epidemic in Gloucester. As comparatively few Nurses have an opportunity of seeing small-pox, and are not familiar with the appearance of the rash, we think that this picture will interest many of our readers, and therefore reproduce it and for their benefit. In an interview with one of the late workers in Gloucester, our correspondent has also gleaned some information with regard to the epidemic which now, at length, seems happily to be stamped out.

The epidemic began in September, 1895, and the Hospital accommodation available speedily proved insufficient; moreover, the small-pox Hospital was nursed, for the most part, by untrained persons of the factory-girl type. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that the report given of it by out-going patients was not one of unqualified praise, or that it became increasingly difficult to induce patients to enter it.

In March, 1896, Miss Evans and a few trained Nurses began district work among the small-pox patients. They were literally besieged at first by people who were anxious for them to undertake the nursing of their sick relatives; the supply of Nurses was quite unequal to the demand, and Miss Evans rapidly increased her staff until she had 26 district Nurses at work, and 50 women assisting them. The Nurses even then had their hands full, as small-pox patients require a great deal of nursing, and the washing of a patient cannot be hurried over. It will be easily understood that cleanliness in a case of this sort is of the utmost importance, that the washing must be performed with extreme gentleness, and the drying of the patient be effected by a dabbing process. It is therefore impossible to wash a bad case of small-pox and make the patient's bed in much under an

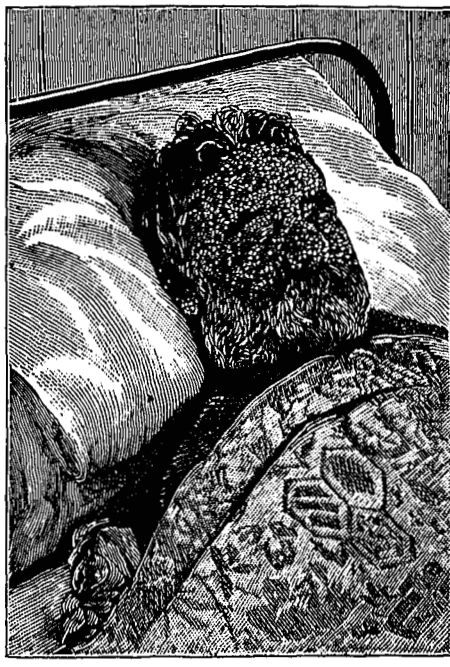
hour. Previous to the advent of the District Nurses, some of the local medical men had been averse to having the patients washed, and the Hospital patients had remained unwashed! but the advantages of a daily ablution were manifestly apparent, and the London medical men who went down to Gloucester gave the weight of their approval in favour of the practice, and so a system of cleanliness was instituted and prevailed. Later on, the Nursing of the Hospital was re-organised, and Dr. Brooke, the Medical Superintendent of the River Ambulance Service, under the Metropolitan Asylums Board, went down to take charge of the Hospital, and Miss

Walker, with six Nurses who had received small-pox training on the Hospital Ships, superintended the Nursing, so that the reputation of the Hospital very considerably increased.

It is a curious fact that the British public have an enormous amount of faith in unprofessional advice: one has only to instance the way in which Nurses are frequently asked to prescribe and advise as a proof of this statement. Trained Nurses, happily, know the danger of meddling with matters of which they are ignorant, but still the credulity of the masses during an epidemic is a thing which can with certainty be reckoned upon. This seems to have been profited by, and pandered

to, by various persons in Gloucester during the small-pox epidemic. A "green ointment" was offered to the public by a "Captain Fielding" which was to act both as a preventive and a cure. Needless to say it was neither, and, though a comparatively harmless concoction, the pustules became more inflamed from its use. One woman, after using this green ointment as a preventive, developed a rash over her face, and a condition resembling erysipelas. She then applied to a medical man, and asked what she was to do. He suggested that he thought Captain Fielding had better cure her!

Then there was a system of giving "Condy Baths," established by an "eminent hydro-pathist" of the name of Pickering. £500 was actually subscribed locally in order that the necessitous poor might be enabled to receive



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