

A HOT BED OF DISEASE.

It would appear that immediate reform is necessary in the Whittington Asylum, Lancashire. The Commissioners say: "with regard to the causes of death, we call most serious attention to the fact that eleven of the deaths were due to diseases of a typhoid character. We beg to call attention to Dr. Perceval's report last year, in which, talking of the deaths, he says: "Seventeen were due to dysentery, and in nine of these abscesses of the liver were found. All occurred either in patients working in connection with the earth closets, or in demented addicted to eating filth," so that in two years the death roll of this asylum from preventable and unsanitary causes has been no less than 28. The Commissioners also report that "dysentery, ulcerative colitis, and enteric fever, have appeared amongst eighteen patients and two nurses, whilst erysipelas has occurred in the case of seven patients and one nurse." A ghastly record of neglect and mismanagement.

AN OBNOXIOUS CUSTOM.

At the Oxford Asylum a custom prevails which the Commissioners "hope and believe to be a unique practice," that of "putting destructive patients to sleep on loose hair, of which a small heap is put in the room, and covered with a ticken sheet."

DIETARY.

The report on the food of the patients is of interest. We must say that we gather from the remarks of the Commissioners on this subject, that the food supplied, in most cases, does not come up to the standard of an ordinary hospital. We read "the dinner of herrings and butter-milk was not generally approved, though the potatoes were very good," "the dinner to-day was a pudding and bread and cheese; the pudding was not popular with several, but was in itself very good," "we saw a dinner of tinned beef and potatoes—the meal was not too popular," "we saw a savoury dinner of mutton hash, with two vegetables, well served in the wards—the meal was relished," "the patients were just about to sit down to a dinner of soup and bread," "vegetable soup with a liberal allowance of bread, with either cider or skimmed milk was evidently popular."

SERVICE OF FOOD.

The following are some of the remarks of the Commissioners on this subject:—

"We would ask the Committee seriously to consider whether it would not be worth their going to some expense to have a certain number of attendants and nurses instructed in the art of carving. We feel sure much meat would be saved, and patients would be contented with their rations instead of turning away from the hacked joints put on their plates."

"We think that the private patients, at any rate, ought to have linen table-cloths at meal-times."

"We think that those who are without teeth should have their food minced."

"Surely, also, 'margarine,' and but 3rds of an ounce per day of that, should be eliminated from the dietary of the patients."

The standard of nursing in vogue in Asylums, as brought out in the foregoing columns, seems scarcely one which well-trained nurses would care to adopt, or wish to see recognised as qualifying for admission to membership of the Royal British Nurses' Association. Yet it is precisely this standard of training which Sir James Crichton Browne, Dr. Outterson Wood, visitor in lunacy, and their colleagues desire to force upon trained nurses as qualifying for registration equally with their own.

Dramatic Note.

THE LATE LADY MARTIN.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—As one of the very few living persons who have not merely seen but criticized—so far as criticism was possible—the exquisite Shakespearian Impersonations of the gifted lady—formerly the celebrated Helen Faucit—who has just passed away, after long and patient endurance of severe suffering, may I ask you to let me very briefly record my personal impressions of her consummate acting. Though I did not see her in the zenith of her beauty, I saw her in what, to the really appreciative eye, was far better, the height of her experience, viz.: when she was playing with the late Mr. Samuel Phelps at "Drury Lane," in 1864. As Imogen in Cymbeline she was, at that period, the very incarnation of Pathos and Power, combining in the highest degree the stateliness of the Princess with the sweetness of the woman! As Lady Macbeth, while she excelled as the *Artiste*, she somewhat failed as the Impersonator, but this, first, because, as I wrote at the time, her fibre was too essentially feminine to enable her to give a life-like portrayal of the terrible heroine, who, as her husband Macbeth declares, should "bring forth men-children only, as her undaunted mettle should compose nothing but males;" and secondly, because, as Lady Martin acknowledges in her Work upon "The Female Characters of Shakespeare," she had an invincible repugnance to undertake so odious a Part! As Juliet, the Helen Faucit of 1864 evidently retained all the fire and spirit of her earlier days, refined by increased Art, and exalted by greater intellectual perception.

The only two English Actresses who, in our time, have approached her in the delineation of this most charming as well as most affecting *role*, were the meteoric Stella Colas, and perhaps the lamented Adelaide Neilson, but neither of these Actresses conveyed to their audiences the delicate sweetness no less than tragic intensity of the character so fully as did Helen Faucit. It is not for me, at such a moment as the present, to dwell upon that life "behind the Scenes," which it was once the lot of Helen Faucit to pass through. Suffice it to say, that as an Actress, she set a shining example to all her Professional Sisters, of how constant contact with the stage need not corrupt, I will not say the morals but, the manners of the woman, and that, in fulfilling the functions of that domestic career which she was happily destined long to enjoy, she showed how Histrionic Art, when worthily practised, need not detract from the simplicity of Nature, how the grace, which adorned the "Boards," could be

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)