

**Mr. John Spear's report to the Local Government Board upon an inquiry concerning an outbreak of typhus fever at Nazareth House, Hammersmith : with special reference to the alleged neglect in that institution of house and personal sanitation.**

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Mr. John Spear's Report to the Local Government Board upon an Inquiry concerning an outbreak of Typhus Fever at Nazareth House, Hammersmith, with special reference to the alleged neglect in that Institution of house and personal sanitation.

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GEORGE BUCHANAN,  
Medical Department,  
May 23, 1883.

NAZARETH HOUSE is a home, maintained and administered by a number of Sisters of the Order of Nazareth, for the succour of the aged poor, without regard to their religious faith, and of destitute children. The Home is at present fully occupied, and the inmates are as follows: The reverend Mother, the assistant Mother, and 51 Sisters of Charity; 133 old people of both sexes; 175 children, of ages ranging from a few months to 16 years. The total number of inmates is thus 361.

No domestic servants are employed; the sisters, with a little aid from the old people, and from the elder girls who are in training for domestic service, performing all the household duties. Some 40 ladies are regularly employed about the establishment, while the remainder go all over London in quest of alms. Ten sisters are constantly engaged in the personal care and nursing of the children.

#### I.—THE OUTBREAK OF FEVER.

The difficulty of obtaining an accurate history of this outbreak of typhus fever will be understood when it is said that the first case dates back to the middle of October last, and that the subsequent cases, for at least three months, are said to have been so mild as to arouse little suspicion of fever in the mind of Mr. Alderton, the medical attendant of the Home. It is pretty certain, however, that the first to be attacked was a child, E. L., who sickened on or about the 22nd October. No previous sickness for some time had been noticed amongst the children at Nazareth House, and no case of the least suspicion amongst the elder inmates. E. L. was thought to be suffering from "influenza," but the sister who nursed her remembers now a measly rash, that deafness was a prominent symptom, and that the hair afterwards fell off, so as to leave the head almost bald. This child was visited it appears on the visiting Sunday previous to her attack, October 8th, by an uncle, and a cousin a child of three years of age. The man was noticed to be looking ill, and is said to have spoken, in reply to inquiries by the sisters, of "fever" in his home. He occupied, I found, a very bad cellar dwelling, consisting of two tiny, ill-lighted, and ill-ventilated rooms in Albany Street. He denies that he spoke of fever, but states that on the day in question he took his child to Hammersmith "for change of air," as the child was then recovering from some illness. He too had been ailing with, as he believes, a cold; and the mother likewise appears to have suffered from some indefinite indisposition, caused, as she thought, by the closeness of the dwelling. Six other families had rooms, although of a much superior kind, in the house in Albany Street, and it does not appear that illness of a suspicious character occurred amongst them. Of the child's illness I could not obtain any definite medical account, for the doctor had, he said, forgotten it. The mother tells me that the child sickened suddenly on September 19th, with "inward convulsions," that the cause of the illness was thought at first to be "inflammation of the membranes of the brain," but that the doctor said he must have been mistaken when the child somewhat suddenly showed symptoms of improvement. The child was left very weak, so that he could not walk for some time, and it was then, on October the 8th, that he was taken to Nazareth House. The history, it will be seen, is not unlike that of typhus fever in a child.

Returning to the fever at Nazareth House, the attacks from this time forward were evidently due to personal contagion; and they all occurred, with one exception, amongst the elder, or "class-room" children, and amongst the sisters in attendance upon them. These children (all girls) number about 70 of the 175 children of the home; and four sisters are regularly engaged in their tuition and management. It was



not until the end of November, five weeks after E. L.'s attack, and when the latter had been down again and in the class-room about a fortnight, that the second child (C. O.) was taken ill. Then a child who had sat at C. O.'s bedside, reading to her, was laid down; and so the disease continued to spread, until on the 9th of January eight cases had occurred; all of them, with the exception of the first case, being very slight it appears, so that the disease was still looked upon as an influenza. On January 9th, Christmas day was kept; the children had a Christmas-tree and a dramatic performance, and in the evening a large party of friends from the outside, as well as the inmates, including the convalescent children, were assembled in the "Community" Hall. Inquiries have been made as to whether any of the visitors on this occasion contracted fever, but with negative results except in the case of two priests. These gentlemen both played much with the children on January 9th, and they both afterwards passed through an attack of fever, which was regarded at the time by different medical attendants as typhoid, but which there is great probability was typhus. One sickened exactly fourteen days after the day of the party; the other had been ailing for some days, and the commencement of his attack is not well determined. On the 9th of January two children were poorly at Nazareth House, and one was confined to bed; and on the following day two sickened. One of these last suffered from a lung complication, and died on January 23rd. She was 18 years of age, and her death was certified as from "influenza, congestion, and convulsions." Meanwhile other cases occurred, so that on February 2nd seven more children were ill. The medical attendant now suspected typhus fever; precautions as to the admission of strangers were prescribed, and a few days later, on February 6th, when a sister who had been nursing the children was attacked, pretty complete quarantine measures were adopted. The doctor practically took charge; and says himself that his orders were implicitly obeyed.

The dormitories on the upper or third floor of the wing occupied by the class-children were devoted to the convalescents and the sick, the rooms being isolated by the closing of the corridor-doors and the use of sheets saturated in disinfecting fluid; food supplies, &c., were left outside the doors, and the three sisters in attendance confined themselves to the sick rooms. Schooling was discontinued, and the second or class-room floor was given up to the still healthy class-room children, who were thus also isolated from the rest of the inmates. One sister and an inmate, a middle-aged woman who had been a nurse, had charge of them; they had their meals brought to the door of the class-room; they were only allowed in the garden and playground when no one else was there; attendance at chapel was discontinued; and their baths were taken in the dormitories (the medical attendant states that he has seen their baths being prepared). On the 15th of the month, the sister who had charge of the healthy children, and the one also who was attending to the convalescents, were taken ill of the fever. Others took their places, but the three sisters who generally had the management of these children were at this juncture incapacitated. During this time fresh cases of fever amongst the children were developing, so that on the 21st of the month, when the aid of the sanitary authority was asked, seven more children in various stages of the disease were ill, besides four sisters, for a fourth had just sickened. The seven children were removed on the following day to the Western Fever Hospital. Subsequently, two more sisters were attacked, one, who had been nursing the sick, on March 4th, the other, who had been engaged in washing infected clothing, on March 20th; and three children, one on March 2nd, one on the 10th, and one on the 19th of the same month. The last was the only case that occurred in the institution beyond the class-room children, and those of the sisters who attended upon them; and the sufferer was a little boy who was found to have obtained opportunities of playing with a convalescent. No case of any suspicion occurred amongst the adult inmates, *i.e.*, the recipients of the charity.

The cases in all may be said to have been 31 in number; two priests, besides, were probably infected at the home, and a nurse at the hospital, who attended upon the children after their removal, contracted the disease. This patient died, as did also one sister and one child.

The spread of typhus fever is usually found to be associated with bad sanitary conditions—especially with overcrowding and dirt; and I shall have presently to describe in full the sanitary circumstances of this institution. It will be convenient, however, to examine first certain specific statements to the effect that the conditions named existed at Nazareth House at the time of the fever prevalence. The statements in question are comprised in two documents; one, a report, bearing date April 10th,





1883, by Mr. Collier, the Medical Officer of Health of the Fulham District, to his Board of Works; the other a report by Dr. Sweeting, the Medical Superintendent of the Western Fever Hospital, to the Managers of the Metropolitan Asylums District, on the 17th of March 1883. Upon the receipt of the latter, the Managers of the Metropolitan Asylums District forwarded a copy to the Local Government Board, whilst the Fulham Board of Works adopted a Memorial, on the 18th of April, to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, praying for an official inquiry; a course that was afterwards followed by the Fulham Board of Guardians.

In his report, Mr. Collier states that on the 21st of February he was asked by the medical attendant of Nazareth House to see 10 cases of fever there, 7 children and 3 sisters of mercy; that no notes of the cases had been taken; and that "without such information, and owing to the dirty condition of the bodies of the patients, it was not possible to form a diagnosis as to what fever they were suffering from, and I did not form a diagnosis."

Speaking of the sanitary condition of the place, he continues: "You are aware that previous to this outbreak of fever I reported to you that, upon an inspection of the premises, I found that some of the rooms were so overcrowded and badly ventilated as to be injurious to health. I wrote and informed the Mother Superintendent that a space of 2,000 cubic feet should be allowed to each inmate in the sleeping wards, and a space of not less than 200 cubic feet in the day wards. The Mother Superintendent promised to comply with my requirements. I am not at all surprised at typhus spreading with an atmosphere so polluted, and with such neglect of personal cleanliness."

The seven children referred to above as suffering from "fever" were removed on the following day, February the 22nd, to the Western District Fever Hospital, four of them, Julia Graham, Alice Walker, Agnes Farrow, and Mary Penn, in the morning of that day, and three, Lottie Avery, Alice Whitham, and Theresa Nichols in the evening. Dr. Sweeting, reporting as above on the 17th of March, says, "The diagnosis of the disease in the first group of cases was somewhat doubtful; the members of the second group, however, after careful examination, seemed to be suffering from typhus fever. Therefore, on February 23rd, they were all transferred to the South-Western Fever Hospital at Stockwell, as no typhus is received at this hospital. On admission here all these cases were dirty in the extreme, and infested with vermin; in fact, the first cases were so flea-bitten that this greatly hampered the diagnosis. I was informed by the medical officer of health for Fulham, that only 90 cubic feet of air-space is available for each girl inmate of the school, and that there had been more than 60 girls previously ill." And, showing how serious was the interpretation Dr. Sweeting placed on these observations, he continued, "We have in these cases two undoubted factors suitable for the development of typhus: viz., uncleanness and deficient ventilation."

I have taken the statements of the nurses of the Fulham Fever Hospital, and this evidence may be added; it is to the following effect:—That a large number of lice were in the heads of the children, and are said, by the disinfectors, to have been seen upon the clothes; that the knees and feet of the children, especially of the elder ones, were ingrained with dirt, so as to require scrubbing; that the rest of the body was, according to two nurses, "dirty," according to one, "not particularly dirty;" that, according to the opinion of two nurses, the children had not been bathed for a month, according to the opinion of a third, not for a fortnight or three weeks (the last-named nurse saw, it appears, only the three children who arrived in the evening, but these, it is said, were as dirty as the others). Neither body lice, nor bugs, nor fleas were observed, but flea-bites are spoken of.

Eight of the 10 patients referred to in Mr. Collier's report (five of the seven removed to hospital) were seen, at Mr. Alderton's request, by independent physicians, at the time they are said to have been in a dirty condition, and I have been asked to take into consideration, for the purposes of this inquiry, the subjoined correspondence:—

5, The Grove, Hammersmith, W.  
1st May 1883.

SIR,

WITH regard to the charges made against the management of Nazareth House, I have, as the medical attendant of that institution, to state that on the 21st February I informed Mr. Collier, the Medical Officer of Health, that there were several cases of typhus fever amongst the inmates, that others had occurred, and invited him to see the cases with me.

He saw seven children, and three sisters, the eruption was remarked by both of us, and its character discussed (Mr. Collier not thinking it typhus). I heard no mention from him as to the dirty condition of the



patients; and as to the statement to this effect made afterwards I beg to forward you the enclosed correspondence. I wish further to add, that since I have been the medical attendant to this institution its condition as to cleanliness, amount of air space, &c., is as you have found it.

John Spear, Esq.,  
&c., &c., &c.

I have, &c.,  
T. GUNTON ALDERTON.

*Copy.*

5, The Grove, Hammersmith, W.  
30th April 1883.

DEAR SIR,

You will have seen the charges made with regard to Nazareth House. Certain children who were removed to the Western District Fever Hospital from that institution on the 22nd February are said to have been so dirty, and fleabitten, as to hinder (according to a statement by Mr. Collier to prevent) diagnosis. You saw some of these children before their removal. Will you kindly inform me in what condition you found their persons.

Yours faithfully,  
T. GUNTON ALDERTON.

To Dr. Mahomed, Assistant Physician to Guy's Hospital,  
and Physician to the London Fever Hospital.  
E. C. Barnes, Esq., M.R.C.S. and L.S.A., Hammersmith.  
H. Walker, Esq., L.R.C.P., Hammersmith.

#### MEMORANDUM.

The children seen by Mr. Barnes and Mr. Walker on the 17th February include (of those said to be dirty) —  
Julia Graham, 16.

Mary Penn, 6.

(Removed, Western District Fever Hospital on the morning of February 22.)

Lottie Avery, 15.

Alice Whitham, 7.

Theresa Nichols, 14.

(Removed on the evening of the same day.)

Dr. Mahomed's statement refers to the three children removed on the evening of February 22nd.

T. GUNTON ALDERTON.

12, St. Thomas's Street, S.E.  
May 1, 1883.

MY DEAR SIR,

In reply to your inquiry I have much pleasure in stating that when I visited Nazareth House with you on Thursday, February 22nd, I examined the four sisters of mercy, and several children who were then ill. I did not find their persons unclean, nor their surroundings dirty; they appeared to me thoroughly well cared for, and I was much impressed by the excellent arrangements for isolation, the good accommodation for the sick, and the good ventilation obtained.

I have seen the extracts from Mr. Collier's report published in the British Medical Journal, and elsewhere. In my opinion, the injurious statements he makes are quite unjustified. I may add that I found no difficulty in recognising the rash, or in making a diagnosis of typhus. I ought, perhaps, to mention that I noticed lice in the heads of one or two of the patients, but this I did not regard with surprise in cases of fever, especially in an establishment containing a large number of poor children.

Yours faithfully,  
F. A. MAHOMED.

T. Gunton Alderton, Esq.

4, The Cedars, Hammersmith Road, W.  
April 30th, 1883.

DEAR SIR,

In answer to your letter of to day, I beg to say that I visited some patients at Nazareth House on the 17th February 1883.

There was nothing in the condition of the bodies of those patients to hinder me from forming a diagnosis of the disease. The children were clean, and appeared to be well cared for.

I examined seven children; they were all undoubtedly suffering from typhus fever.

I remain, yours faithfully,  
H. WALKER, L.R.C.P. (Lond.).

T. Gunton Alderton, Esq.,  
5, The Grove, Hammersmith, W.

Gloucester House, Hammersmith.  
30th April 1883.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE seen, with surprise, the charges made against Nazareth House. The seven children visited by me on 17th February were undoubtedly suffering from typhus fever, and there was nothing in their bodily condition to obscure the diagnosis; indeed, I expressed my opinion as to the nature of the disease emphatically, and without doubt.

The children were in an airy room, of sufficient cubic space; and, although fleabitten, were personally as cleanly as the children of industrious, painstaking, worthy, and respectable poor parents. After 20 years in general practice I may add that fleas are no respecters of persons.

Yours faithfully,  
T. Gunton Alderton, Esq. EDWARD CHARLES BARNES, M.R.C.S., L.S.A.

[It may be said that I ought to have added to this evidence the statements of the medical attendant, and of the sisters who nursed these children before their removal to the hospital. It is fair to make it known that such statements were offered to me with specific references to occasions of bathing, &c.; but, rightly or wrongly, I decided to exclude the evidence of those officially connected with the institution.]



The above statements may be considered—1st, as to the alleged overcrowding; and 2ndly, as to the alleged uncleanness of the patients in February last.

1. *The alleged overcrowding.*—The evidence on this head, although Dr. Sweeting has been led to quote Mr. Collier, rests upon the statements of the latter gentleman alone. The inspection of Nazareth House to which he refers as having been made previous to this outbreak, and when overcrowding is said to have been found, was made, it appears, in the latter part of the year 1880. The number of rooms, &c., in use at that time was the same as now; but some slight re-distribution of the inmates was made soon after Mr. Collier's inspection. After every careful attempt to guard against error, I do not find that there has been at any time an approach to overcrowding; nor can any room be properly spoken of as ill-ventilated. (This subject is fully dealt with in Part II. of the Report.)

In the common lodging-houses of the Fulham district, air-space to the amount of about 260 cubic feet, it is computed, is required for each inmate of a dormitory (300 for adults and half that amount for children under 10), and for workhouses the much more suitable space of 360 cubic feet is now prescribed. In the matter of day- and school-room accommodation, 100 cubic feet per head is the amount required in workhouses, and 117, the space adopted by the London School Board as the standard for grade schools. At Nazareth House the amount of air-space afforded to the class-room children (the children invaded by the fever) ranges in their dormitories from 400 to 600 cubic feet per head; one room only giving as little as 400, whilst the room holding the largest number of children (21) gives the maximum amount. The class-rooms used by these children for the last two years afford nearly 300 cubic feet to each child, and that in use at the time of Mr. Collier's visit afforded about 200 cubic feet; and besides the class-rooms a dining-room is of course provided.

Mr. Collier would, however, prescribe 2,000 cubic feet as the sleeping space for each individual; and if this standard be adopted there is assuredly, as he says, much overcrowding. The Board of Works will probably, however, pause before accepting such a standard. Impartially applied, it would result in the depopulation of every institution, save only fever hospitals, and of the great majority of private houses, in their district.

2. *As to the personal condition of the patients in February last:*—The evidence is pretty conclusive that there was some considerable development of lice in the heads of some at least of the children taken to the fever hospital on the 22nd of February; and the balance of evidence goes to show that there was some uncleanness, specially noticeable in the rough skin of the knees and feet, of the bodies of these children.

The question to be answered is—What is the interpretation to be given to these observations? Do they really mean habitual neglect? or do they indicate the relaxation for a few days, or perhaps for a week or two, of personal attention?

In deciding this question, Mr. Collier's statement affords little or no assistance. The amount of dirt which would be necessary to render it impossible to an experienced eye to diagnose, in a series of ten cases, typhus fever, would indeed be extraordinary; whilst, on the other hand, a very small amount, to an observer unfamiliar with typhus, suffices to obscure the eruption; or, what is very likely to happen, the very aspect and rash peculiar to the typhus patient might be mistaken for a general dirtiness.

Dr. Mahomed, and Messrs. Barnes and Walker, saw nothing, to say the least of their observations, to excite surprise; so that imputation of any serious neglect against the sisters must, it would seem, if it is to be sustained, rest upon the evidence coming from the Western Fever Hospital.

That evidence indicates a considerable development of lice in some at least of the heads of the children (the latter could not be spoken of individually); but, as to this, we have the evidence also of Dr. Mahomed, a physician of special experience, that he does not regard it with surprise in cases of fever, especially in an institution where poor children are received—that is to say, in an institution where the chance introduction of lice from time to time is scarcely to be avoided; and, although he noticed lice in the heads of one or two of the patients, he says, speaking of the patients generally, "I did not find their persons unclean, nor their surroundings dirty; they appeared to me thoroughly well cared for."

The evidence from the fever hospital further indicates some amount of bodily uncleanness. Now the nurses there were evidently not disposed to minimize matters, yet I could not help being struck with the persistency with which all three spoke of the dirt being "ingrained on the knees," like "housemaid's knees," as one of them



remarked, adding "she did not expect to see this in children from a school." But these children are taught housemaids' duties; four of the seven (aged respectively 16, 15, 14, and 14 years) had done a considerable amount of scrubbing, and, moreover, it is not to be overlooked that these children are accustomed, by the exigencies of their religion, to kneel in the chapel for no less than an hour and a half every day. Under such circumstances the cuticle covering the knee is likely to become thickened and rough, and dirt then very speedily assumes, as we all know, the appearance of being of old-standing and ingrained.

[In the course of my enquiry, I asked Dr. Sweeting, to whose evidence particular importance must attach, if he would inspect for himself Nazareth House and its inmates, feeling sure that the Reverend Mother would offer no objection, and if he would then tell me, for the purposes of this report, the inferences he would draw from his observations on the 22nd February. This he consented to do, and his opinion he requested me to quote in the following words: "Having inspected the children of "Nazareth House, and the arrangements made for their accommodation and management, I am prepared to admit that the conditions I observed in the patients sent to "me on the 22nd of February might be due to some temporary abatement of care, "and not to habitual neglect;" and he wishes me to add, although this does not apply to the subject now under consideration, "I was misled by the verbal information of the "Medical Officer of Health for Fulham as to ventilation, and I am of opinion that the "alleged overcrowding is incompatible with the structure and arrangements of the "Institution.""]

Having reached this stage, the question arises, "Is there safe ground for supposing "that the children for a short time prior to their removal to the hospital on the "22nd of February were under other than their ordinary management?"—In answer, the history of the outbreak of fever may be recalled. The conditions under which they were living at this time were, indeed, altogether different from those of their ordinary mode of life. On the 6th or 7th of February the medical attendant's measures of quarantine were applied. The care of three of the four sisters most accustomed to the class-room children was withdrawn from those (to the number of about 53) who remained healthy, their places being supplied by the remaining sister and a nurse inmate; and a week after, this sister falling ill of the fever, the services of one of less experience had to be substituted. During this time, moreover, school had been broken up; the children were confined to one part of the building, with occasional visits to the playground, their meals being taken in the class-room. So far as I can learn, the children highly appreciated this state of things; but, although it apparently lent itself to much boisterous merriment, it could not have been conducive to good management and tidiness. [It should here be said that Dr. Sweeting, when he visited the house and formed his last opinion, was not acquainted with the above facts as to the exceptional conditions under which the children were living previous to their removal to the hospital; although he knew, of course, of the illness of the Sisters.]

Mr. Alderton considered it an object of his measures of isolation that as few adult attendants as possible should remain with the class-room children, whether the healthy, the sick, or the convalescents, so that the attendants, like the children, should be isolated. The exclusion of all persons other than those absolutely required from an infected room is, of course, a proper plan; but here I think exclusion was probably carried to some extreme. I do not think from the evidence that the children suffered, except in the matter of what may be called general tidiness; and, in fact, the measures proved, as after-events showed, successful in stopping the disease with them.

But it is a notable fact that at this time the Sisters in attendance commenced to suffer severely; and that, when attacked, they were, to use Dr. Mahomed's expression, "desperately ill." Fatigue is a potent pre-disposing influence in typhus, and the Sisters who were left to look after the healthy children and to nurse the sick were probably over-worked. Mr. Alderton himself told me of one, afterwards attacked, who fell on the floor in a swoon whilst bathing one of the fever-stricken children—one of those afterwards removed to the hospital.

I pass now to the report of my own investigation into the sanitary condition and management of Nazareth House.

## II.—THE SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF NAZARETH HOUSE.

*Structural Arrangements of the Building and permanent Sanitary Provisions.*—The building is a large four-storied one, standing on a site of more than two acres in extent, and in a fairly open situation. The central block and wings were erected at



different times, but evidently on a preconceived plan, the design of which, having regard to the purposes of the building, is excellent. The corridors and staircases are light and airy. Many of the rooms are spacious, and all admit, by the arrangement of doors and windows, of thorough cross ventilation. Each room has one fireplace, the larger two, and the larger rooms are provided with Sheringham or valve ventilators in each side wall, and generally with swing windows opening into the corridors. No doubt the old people will attempt sometimes to close air-inlets, this I am told is the single bone of contention between them and the sisters, but I saw no evidence that this tendency was unduly indulged. No room in the establishment can be properly spoken of as ill-ventilated.

Every room is cheerful and well lighted, with the single exception of a room in the basement used by some of the elder children for taking meals. Here a naturally poor supply of light is further obstructed by thick ground-glass in the windows. The children, I find, never occupy it for more than twenty minutes at one time; still, another more cheerful apartment is about to be provided. [This has since been done.]

The building is throughout of substantial construction (exclusive of the chapel it is said to have cost in building alone over 27,000*l.*); nooks and corners have been so far as possible avoided; the walls are dry, and the boards of the floors smooth and closely laid.

The drainage appears to be exceptionally good. Waterclosets are placed in well isolated positions at the end of the corridors on each floor. They are all well ventilated, abundantly supplied with water, and free from nuisance. Slop-stone sinks, with water taps (cold water, however, only being laid on), are likewise found on each floor and in each wing. The waste pipes from the sinks are cut off from direct communication with the sewer, and the watercloset pipes are ventilated.

Three large fixed baths, with hot and cold water laid on, are evidently in frequent use. Movable baths are likewise provided for the infirm and for young children.

A good wash-house, with drying room and all proper appliances, is provided at a distance from the main building, and a good linen room, &c. in the interior.

A play ground is provided for the children. It is not turfed, and this, together with the fact that it is adjacent to kitchen gardens, makes it dusty, and must add to the difficulty of keeping the children clean.

A private burial ground, occupying a tiny plot at the extreme end of the two acres of ground, is used under an Act of Parliament for the burial of sisters who die in the Institution. Interments are conducted under strict regulations, and only 13 have taken place there during 28 years.

A mortuary for the immediate removal of dead bodies from the house is provided.

A medical attendant is engaged at a fixed salary, and visits the home daily. A dispensary is provided within the home, and one of the sisters has for many years discharged the duties of a dispenser.

For the isolation of cases of infectious disease, a small spare-room, well capable of separation from the rest of the building, has hitherto been used, and apparently with success. It may properly be made use of thus in a first case or two of infectious disease, but should an outbreak, especially of scarlatina or small-pox, assume any larger proportion, further attempt to isolate the cases on the premises should, in my opinion, be abandoned.

As to typhus, I cannot believe that in a building like this it might not be at once stamped out, provided the disease were recognised and the needful precautions observed.

The institution is no doubt considerably exposed to the danger of imported disease, for the friends of the inmates often pay visits, and left-off clothing, old toys, &c., are received as gifts. Still, it seems to have escaped any serious danger until the recent outbreak, and the medical attendant informs me that during the six years he has been attached to the Home the appearance of infectious disease has been confined to the following occurrences:—Scarlatina; introduced on four separate occasions, in 1879 six or seven cases occurred, in 1880 a single case, in 1882 two cases, and now, as I write, a single case. Small-pox; two cases in 1881, when the disease was prevalent outside (two cases of suspected small-pox were removed to hospital in January of the present year, but on further examination the diagnosis was not confirmed). Measles; prevalence amongst the children in 1881.

*The Management of the Institution from a Sanitary View point.—Air-space provided.*—An exact computation was made of the cubical contents of each room in the institution occupied by the poor inmates and children, together with the amount of air-space per head. In the dormitories, both of the children and adults, air-space is given of from 400 to 600 cubic feet per head. The rooms, used partially as day rooms as well as dormitories by the aged and infirm, afford a space in no case



falling below 550 cubic feet per head, and this amount, in a few rooms, equals and even exceeds 800 cubic feet. The rooms used partially by day as well as by night by children, viz., the boys' nursery, the girls' nursery, and the invalid children's room, afford air-space to each of the night occupants of from 460 to 500 cubic feet; and, although the number of children that may at times resort to these rooms by day is greater than the number of night occupants (about 88 as compared with 61), the space is then supplemented in each case by a broad corridor, which is so constructed, with partition doors and large side windows to the open air, as to form a very fair day-room, and is fitted with tables, forms, &c. for that purpose. Here the children sit and play, and often have their meals; and the boys' corridor has a door opening direct upon the play-ground.

The day and dining rooms of the old people are spacious and airy; and the class-rooms of the school children afford cubical contents approaching 300 feet per head, and are exceedingly cheerful and well ventilated.

A varying number of children (usually about 12 or 15) are, from various causes (being afflicted with blindness, subject to fits, to dirty habits, &c.), kept apart from the others, and occupy rooms along with the old people. The air-space in every case is abundant.

Referring to the building as a whole, it may be said that the space provided compares favourably, in the case of every room, with that required in similar institutions under Government supervision; and that no room can be spoken of as overcrowded.

*As to Cleanliness.*—Throughout the building, as regards walls, floors, ceilings, &c., evidences of scrupulous and long continued cleanliness are apparent; but it was necessary that my investigation should be minute, and, to an extent, so far as the children were concerned, personal. To this ready assent was given. I accordingly, on my first visit, and when such an examination was evidently not expected, examined the clothes, mattresses, &c., of many of the beds; the heads of many of the children; and a whole class of children, at a moment's notice, bared their feet and legs for my inspection. Moreover, I visited the children not only at different times during successive days, but, without the slightest notice, at night, when they were in bed. I very much doubt whether many public institutions in the country, receiving the same class of children, could stand so well so rigid an examination.

As to the beds, the bedsteads throughout the building are small "single" iron ones; the poor inmates, including the children, sleep on flock beds; the sisters, on straw mattresses. The bed clothing, although of poor material, and made up much of old travelling rugs, patchwork quilts, &c., was, in every case I examined, clean; and I saw no fleas or other vermin. At the time of my night visits I saw no case of two children in one bed; and all those of many children I looked at had completely changed their day clothing for very creditably clean night-dresses. The rooms, too, were well ventilated, and the air pure.

The appearance of the feet and legs of the elder children bore out to the full the statement of the mother and sisters that a weekly bath is invariably given to every child. The infants and younger children are bathed daily in the nurseries, and I have seen the baths being prepared for the purpose.\*

The daily ablutions are performed by the elder children in the corridors, which are not ill-adapted to the purpose, being, as I have said, spacious and well lighted, and provided with doors at short intervals. A sister is always present during the time the children, stripped to the waist, are washing themselves; and the arrangements are such, that no child, it is said, washes in water previously used. In the summer the girls are encouraged to take a cold sponge-bath daily, and with many of them this is the rule. Each "class-room girl," that is, each child above about six years of age, has her separate brush and comb, which are kept in a neat bag hanging at each bedhead.

I watched for any scratching of heads whilst the school girls were set to sing in chorus for me. During a somewhat prolonged performance no girl, out of 53 present, raised her hand (during two subsequent occasions, only one showed signs of itchiness). Besides this, I examined the heads of over 20 girls without seeing a louse; although, in four, old eggs were still adhering to the hair, showing that the usual difficulty in such institutions of keeping free from this pest was experienced. The want of entire success in dealing with it has been due, I satisfied myself, to ignorance of

\* On Saturday, the 5th of May, after I was thought to have taken final leave of the place, I visited it again, when the children were in bed, and examined the legs and feet of many of the elder ones. They had evidently been not only washed, but scrubbed that day, and in the roughness of the knees and elsewhere not a trace of dirt was apparent.



the life history of the louse, and to consequent defective methods of treatment. On the entrance of a dirty child (and I am told that the children almost without exception are dirty on entrance), a sister will comb its head three or four times a day, until the vermin have apparently disappeared; but, since each of the fully developed female lice (that is, female lice of 18 days standing) will probably have deposited 50 eggs within the preceding six days (that, it is estimated, is about their rate of increase), and since these eggs do not under ordinary circumstances hatch for six days, it is clear that unless the combing be continued for at least that period the child's head will not be free, nor can it mix safely with others if combing only be resorted to.

Thirty-five of the 175 children of Nazareth House are maimed or deformed or otherwise permanently afflicted. Apart from these the children are healthy; their general appearance being distinctly indicative of sufficient and wholesome food.

Although the management of the institution and of the children be now excellent, this does not of itself disprove past neglect; and whilst a number of small observations and incidents have carried conviction to my own mind that of such neglect suspicion would be unjust, yet I recognize the difficulty of giving these small observations due weight in words. The walls and ceilings of the various rooms and corridors are, as I have said, clean, yet they are not generally so absolutely clean as to evince a new white-washing (indeed in one of my last visits, when inspection was thought to be over, I observed two sisters painting the walls of a corridor); the floors, and all surfaces that need scrubbing, are not superficially clean merely, but clean in the crevices and polished with rubbing; the kitchen is bright with burnished kitchen utensils. The baths, washstands, &c., as well as the excellent appliances of the laundry, are worn evidently with use and not with age; and the beds, bed-clothing, and the clothes of the children are clean, yet very far from new. The physical condition of the children—their plump and rosy faces—bears evidence of habitual cleanliness, for although isolated children may apparently thrive in dirt, this is not the experience when there is any considerable aggregation, and under such circumstances sore heads and sore eyes, at least, are common. Here, however, of the 175 children, I found only 10 with slightly sore heads, three or four of these at least having come to the institution with the defect upon them; and only two cases of sore eyes, both being in the invalid children's room. Moreover, if all this great improvement had taken place quite recently (my inquiry commenced within two months of any complaint being made, and within two days of the adoption of the memorial of the Fulham Board of Works, praying for an official inquiry), its progress would still be apparent. Yet, excepting in the few recent sufferers from fever, I fail to recognize any difference in the appearance of the children now from that I observed when I first visited them more than a fortnight ago.

The marked cheerfulness, and frank and fearless bearing, of the children are extremely noticeable, and constitute, in my opinion, specially valuable evidence in this regard. For a child's nature cannot be changed in a few weeks; and proof of long-continued kindness to him affords a strong presumption that he has been the object also of solicitude and care.

The information I have given as to the bathing arrangements, &c. of the children was given to me freely and openly by the Mother and sisters, standing in the various rooms within the hearing of these intelligent children—the little ones, indeed, crowding round with much interest, and evidently watching for opportunities to add a word.

Lastly, since I presented my interim report, I find that Mr. Hedley, General Inspector of the Local Government Board, inspected Nazareth House in March last, on the occasion of a proposal to transfer a blind pauper child from the Whitechapel Union to that institution, and that he reported, "There can be no doubt that it is a suitable place for Elizabeth Barret." The inspector was not informed of the recent outbreak of fever, then thought to be controlled, and this reticence is to be regretted. It appears, however, that the special object of Mr. Hedley's visit was not understood, and that it was never intended to receive Elizabeth Barret, or any other fresh inmate, until all fear of infection was over. When the time came, the authorities of the Whitechapel Union were informed by the sisters of the reason and necessity of delay.



## III.—SUMMARY.

To summarise the results of the Inquiry, I find:—

1stly. That the spread of typhus fever at Nazareth House was not attributable, in any sense, either to overcrowding or to dirt; but that it spread because, occurring at first in a mild form amongst children, the disease remained for some three months unrecognized, the sick, the convalescent, and the healthy, mixing together.

2ndly. That the sanitary condition, and the management so far as sanitary affairs are concerned, of the institution, are excellent; and that the care habitually bestowed upon the children is worthy of special remark.

May 8th, 1883.

(Signed) JOHN SPEAR.

