Parliamentary Intelligence.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3RD.

TREATMENT OF LUNATICS.

Mr. TITE gave notice that on Tuesday, the 15th inst., he should move for a Select Committee to inquire into the operation of the law relative to the trial and treatment of lunatics, especially those so found by inquisition.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7TH.

Lord NAAS moved for leave to bring in a Bill to consolidate and amend the law relating to the Lunatic Poor in Ireland, the main object of which, he stated, was, in conformity with the recommendations of a Commission, to substitute local authority in the management of the asylums for central and governmental authority, and he described the machinery by which this system of management would be carried out.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8TH.

SALE OF POISONS.

Mr. WALPOLE, in moving for leave to bring in a Bill to regulate the keeping and sale of poisons, said,—I am not aware whether the House wishes me to go into details of the Bill now, or to do so on the second reading, but perhaps I may be permitted to state this:—At the end of last session a Bill for regulating the sale of poisons unanimously passed the other House. When it came down here great objections were taken to it on two grounds—first, that the late period of the session did not allow sufficient time for its consideration; secondly, that the trade of druggists would be interfered with by clauses and restrictions in that Bill. With regard to the late period of the session, that objection is rectified by my bringing forward a Bill at the earliest possible opportunity. With regard to the second objection, I may state that I think I have obviated many difficulties in the way of the Bill of last session. But all the reasons which urged the propriety of such a Bill last summer are increased, I think, to an amazing extent by the fearful occurrence which took place in the autumn at Bradford, and I am sure no one holding the high place which I do would be doing his duty, and Parliament would not be doing their duty unless they endeavoured by some regulations to prevent those accidents and mistakes in the sale of poison by means of which the whole population is put in peril. (Hear, hear.) The object of the Bill which I venture to propose is entirely to regulate the sale of poisons, and I found my provisions on the provisions in the Arsenic Act and the Act for further Regulating the Sale of Arsenic. The Arsenic Act contained certain provisions for regulating and restricting the sale of arsenic. Where a person wishes to purchase arsenic, the fact of the sale, the names of the parties concerned in the sale and purchase, and other circumstances attending the transaction, must all be registered at the time. The question arises whether those provisions have answered the purpose for which they were intended? According to the evidence of Mr. Bell and other gentlemen representing the Pharmaceutical Society, Dr. Taylor, and other famous chemists, given before a committee of the House of Lords, the Arsenic Act has to a great extent tended to diminish the number of poisonings from arsenic. The House will observe that of the number of deaths which occur from poison, many arise from accident. As to deaths occasioned by poison, where the poison is given for the purpose of taking away life, or where it is taken by persons themselves with that view, I am well aware that you cannot by any regulations altogether prevent that form of the evil. With regard to murder by poison, there are provisions in my Bill which may assist in detecting the perpetrator; but I do not think it will have any material effect in preventing murder by the administration of poison. If you refer to the Registrar-General's returns, you will find that eight-tenths of the cases of self-destruction are by the halter, drowning, or the knife—and there are only two-tenths which can be referred to poisons and other causes. Therefore, it would mislead the House if I held out any hope of being able greatly to diminish the number of suicides by the provisions of this Bill. Its chief object is to regulate the keeping and sale of poisons, so as to prevent the deaths which occur by accidental poisoning. The other question which I have to submit to the House is, what things should be included in the schedules of the Bill as poisons. In the Bill of the other House there were 23 articles in one schedule, and I don't know how many in the other. It was

the illegitimate child for whom Providence has prepared it, a deadly poison for any other? The writer of your "Medical Annotations" is led astray, I think, by the contemplation of a possibility that never can arise. No one proposes to employ prostitutes. Prostitutes hardly ever have children. No accoucheur on the look-out for a wet-nurse could be deceived into taking a syphilitic harlot. Of taint from milk there is much more chance from a nurse who has patched up a bad reputation by marriage, and has been accepted on the faith of her certificate, than from an unmarried girl whose one fault would excite the most rigid and unceasing scrutiny.

Now, is there, can there be, any danger, bodily or moral, to an infant, from allowing a girl with her first child, carefully ascertained to be absolutely healthy, to nurse it? To herself or her employer we have seen there can be none. I deny that there can be any to the child.

Physically, the nurse would be ascertained, and is now ascertained, in every case, to be perfectly healthy, and her milk perfectly wholesome. There can be no doubt, no deception about this, if the selection of the nurse, as it always should, be made the doctor's task.

You express a fear as to the effect of "bursts of rage or passions of grief," or other temporary affections that are likely to affect the milk—more likely, he thinks, in a case where the previous life has been "disordered and irregular." Which is most likely to have healthy milk?—a sickly, feeble, nervous, dyspeptic, or fashionable mother, such as those generally are who cannot or will not nurse their children; or a penitent girl, rejoicing at her escape from final ruin, and bodily healthy and strong?

As to any permanent moral effect, I need only state the fear to calm it. It is feared that if a child be suckled for a few months by a woman who has illegally obtained the power of nursing it, though otherwise moral and healthy, that baby will, by virtue of its illegally-secreted food, contract a love of illegality and forbidden pleasure.

With what omniscient power should the previous lives, nay, thoughts and feelings, of all nurses—ay, and mothers—be scrutinized, if this be true! And how many infants, had we this power, would be condemned to the pap-bottle, indigestion, and the grave!

No, Sir, this philanthropy is not "ill-judged," and all requisite care is now, and will be, as the custom extends, "exerted to avoid the mischief that might flow from it."

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Queen Anne-street, Feb. 1859.

W. ACTON.

THE PROFESSION AND HOMŒOPATHY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg to forward you a copy of a resolution passed at a meeting of the Andersonian University Medical Society, held on Saturday, January 29th, respecting a Dr. Gutteridge, of Leicester, an honorary member of this Society, who has embraced the practice of homœopathy, and is the surgeon to a homœopathic dispensary in Leicester.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Andersonian University,
Glasgow, Feb. 1859.

HENRY J. YELD, *Secretary*.

ANDERSONIAN UNIVERSITY MEDICAL SOCIETY, GLASGOW.—President, Andrew Anderson, M.D.—At a meeting of the above Society, held on Saturday, January 29th—Mr. James Duncan, V.P., in the chair.—Mr. Yeld read an extract from the *Leicester Journal*, in which Dr. Gutteridge, an honorary member of this Society, advertizes his homœopathic establishment, and, after making a few remarks, moved—"That Dr. Gutteridge having given up the legitimate practice of medicine by advocating and practising homœopathic principles, his name be forthwith erased from the list of honorary members of this Society." The motion was seconded by Mr. Gibb, and carried unanimously.

On the motion of Mr. McGlashan, the Secretary was requested to forward a copy of the foregoing resolution to the medical journals.

APPOINTMENTS.—Dr. Graily Hewitt has been appointed physician to the British Lying-in Hospital, in the place of Dr. Robert Lee, resigned.—Messrs. Weight and Barford, of Wokingham, are appointed surgeons to the Wellington College; and Mr. Barford is named to the office of chemical lecturer to the institution.