

*The Metropolitan Asylums Board and its Medical Officers.*

A letter in the *British Medical Journal* of January 13th, 1900, is well worthy the perusal of all members of the profession who might think of taking service in these asylums.

The writer, a former assistant medical officer, points out that the assistant medical officers are classed by this Board with the kitchenmaids, laundrymaids, etc., as subordinate, to distinguish them from the principal officers, viz. the matron, steward, etc. The kitchenmaids, he asserts, are better lodged, he (and his successor) having to use his bedroom as an office and general living room.

That medical officers thus treated should be put under regulations tending to prevent promotion under the Board, and rendering advancement elsewhere next to impossible, is not a subject of surprise, and the writer of the letter shows how this result is brought about.

The social standing of the medical officers from the point of view of the Board is perhaps most forcibly and comically illustrated by the presentation to each of its assistant medical officers of the magnificent sum of two shillings as a Christmas box.

This Board, it is well to remember, recently dismissed one of its superintendents after sixteen years' service on grounds that would not bear investigation. The facts as reported to us at the time seemed to indicate the commission of a most atrocious injustice, resulting from the indescribable stupidity, or worse, of the investigating committee, which was afterwards severely censured by the general Board.

The service of the Board would appear, therefore, not only to be attended by extreme physical discomfort and social degradation, but by the absolute loss of all hope of advancement and the risk of unjust treatment, resulting in the destruction of professional reputation.

Medical men entering the service of the Metropolitan Asylums Board, after such a warning, must not look to this JOURNAL for defence or assistance in the event of their being maltreated.

A professional man who is content to be classed with scullerymaids, will certainly be ranked by his brethren in a still lower grade; but we must still hope that the Metropolitan Asylums

Board, which has shown considerable capacity in some respects, may have the good sense to see that their own dignity and importance is not enhanced by degrading their officers, and that good pay and good treatment are conducive to efficiency,—that the Board is indeed a modern governing body, and not a survival, as its dealings with its medical officers would suggest, of an obsolete Bumbledom.

---

*The Publican's Responsibility in Criminal Drunkenness.*

If drunkenness be a crime, as the latest legislation indicates, any person helping to produce it becomes of necessity an accessory, both to the crime and any criminal consequence.

That publicans are responsible, on this contention, for much of the crime in this country appears very probable. Within the few months last past, three judges of assize, Justices Kennedy, Matthew, and Grantham, in charging grand juries, drew attention to the large proportion of drunken crime, and its association with public-house drinking. Justice Grantham, at Durham, went so far as to assert "that every publican from whose house a drunken person went out should be *put in the dock and punished.*"

Public-house drinking is associated with a very large proportion of the crimes reported in the daily press, and the least observant person must have noted the invariable appearance of drunkards in the streets at the hour of closure of the drink-shops.

The evidence, indeed, is overwhelming that publicans do not limit themselves to their function of licensed victuallers, but do their utmost to pander to and cultivate the drink crave in the weak and depraved. It is astonishing that society at large has been for so long morally blind to the iniquitous conditions of the drink traffic.

Every drunken crime, if Mr. Justice Grantham is right, should entail an investigation in regard to the persons who were accessory to the drunkenness : but before this can be efficiently done, the police and local magistrates must be brought to regard their duties in this respect from a very different standpoint from that which now obtains.

The limitation of drink-supply to individuals—a very difficult