

effect, so has been the improvement in the general condition, not of the labouring classes only, but of the whole community as influenced by them. The improvement has been so great as to be well nigh incredible by a generation in which the horrors of the past are either unknown or forgotten. It is good sometimes to call these horrors to remembrance; and it is justifiable to conclude that wisdom thus tested by experience may be accepted as a safe and certain guide for the social legislation of the future.—*The Times*, October 21.

The Westminster Review on Obscure Diseases of the Brain.

The fourth edition of Dr. Winslow's *Obscure Diseases of the Brain and Mind* proves the interest which the public feel in sensational anecdotes of madness, and in a medley of quotations from all sorts of authors concerning it. The reader is not unlikely to finish the perusal of the book with a conviction that any confusion which its incoherent character may naturally have produced, is an indication of some obscure disease of the brain or mind requiring instant medical advice. In that case, the book may possibly have answered its purpose.—*The Westminster Review*, October, 1868.

CORRESPONDENCE.

The Education, Position, and Pay of Assistant Medical Officers of County Asylums.

We have received the following letter from Dr. Crichton Browne with reference to the *Occasional Note* on the "Education, Position, and Pay of Assistant Medical Officers of County Asylums," published in the October number of the *Journal of Mental Science* :—

West Riding Asylum, Wakefield,
22nd September, 1868.

MY DEAR DR. ROBERTSON,—

The medical staff of this Asylum consists of a Medical Director, two Assistant Medical Officers—one acting in the male and one in the female department—and two Clinical Clerks—one acting under the direction of each of the Medical Assistants. The salary of the Senior Medical Assistant for the time being is £125, with the usual allowances, and that of the Junior, £100, while the Clinical Clerks receive no salary, but only furnished apartments, board, &c., and instruction in mental and nervous diseases, in return for their services. After eighteen months' experience of them, I am strongly impressed with the value of these Clinical Clerks, and should not now like to be without them. They are of great service, not merely in keeping the case books, but in widening and extending that general and unremitting supervision which I believe to be so important in a large establishment like this, and in helping on the medical work in various ways. It is almost impossible for me to describe to

you the vivifying influence which these ardent young men, fresh from the schools, exert upon the more confirmed Asylum Medical Officers. They rub off the rust of routine, and create a necessity for vigorous reading. They afford, too, wonderful facilities for carrying out scientific investigations and careful treatment, while they are themselves undergoing the best preparation for subsequent Asylum appointments, and even for general practice. One of my present assistants commenced here as Clinical Clerk. The important point is that the Clinical Clerks should be wisely and cautiously chosen, as it would not do to introduce young practitioners indiscriminately into an institution of this kind. Judicious selection, however, together with paramount and summary authority over them left in the hands of the Medical Superintendent, ought to obviate every danger and difficulty. I hold each of my Medical Assistants responsible for the good conduct of his particular clerk, and have never any trouble. They all work quietly and discreetly, and harmoniously together.

When the additions now in progress here, which will raise the number of lunatics to 1,300, are completed, I mean to suggest to the Committee of Visitors some modifications of the present arrangements. I shall propose that the salary of the Senior Assistants be raised permanently to £150 per annum, that of the Junior remaining where it is at £100, and that £50 a-year be allowed to each of the Clinical Clerks. I feel persuaded that even this small sum will enable me to command a very superior class of men, will render those appointed more contented, and will induce them to remain with me for twelve months.

By the way, the best Clinical Clerk who has joined me is a graduate of the Edinburgh University, with first-class honours. When he was appointed I had a Cambridge man as an applicant, and the next vacancy I have promised to an F.R.C.S. Eng., by examination.

In great haste,

I am,

Dear Dr. Robertson,

Yours most faithfully,

J. CHRICHTON BROWNE.

Dr. Lockhart Robertson, &c, &c.

Regulations as to Clinical Clerks.

1. They shall be appointed by the Medical Director, for periods of three or six months, or longer duration under special circumstances, and shall be subject to summary removal by him on account of misconduct or neglect.
2. They shall devote their whole time to the duties of their office, and shall not engage in any other occupation.
3. They shall be under the control and authority of the Medical Director, and subject to his supervision, shall receive instructions from the Assistant Medical Officers as to the performance of their duties.
4. They shall accompany the Medical Officers on their ordinary visits to the wards of their respective departments, and shall take careful notes of their observations on the various cases and the treatment ordered, for insertion in the case book.
5. They shall also visit the wards of their respective departments at other times when directed by the Medical Officers to do so, with the view of obtaining additional information respecting the cases under treatment.
6. They shall aid the Assistant Medical Officers generally in the discharge of their duties, but shall pay special attention to the condition of the case books, in which they shall keep careful records of all the cases under treatment, being more particularly full and explicit regarding those which are of recent origin, which are undergoing modifications in their character, which are being subjected to active treatment, or which are complicated by accidents or dangerous propensities.

7. They shall attend in the waiting rooms of their respective departments on the admission of new patients, shall note their condition, and endeavour to obtain from the relatives or friends, or Poor Law Officers accompanying them, reliable information as to their antecedent history.

8. They shall attend all *post mortem* examinations and assist in their performance, or take notes of the pathological conditions revealed, according as they may receive instructions from the senior Medical Officer present.

9. They shall assist in any surgical operations or scientific investigations that may be in progress in the Asylum during the period of their residence there, and in the absence of the dispenser shall compound the medicines for the wards, under the supervision of the Assistant Medical Officers.

10. They shall exert what moral influence they can with the patients for their benefit, and shall endeavour to promote their employment and recreation.

11. They shall immediately report to the Medical Director any instance of misconduct or neglect on the part of a subordinate officer, attendant, nurse, or servant, that may come to their knowledge.

12. They shall not leave the Asylum together, and shall only absent themselves at any time with the sanction of the Medical Director, and for such period as he may permit.

J. CRICHTON BROWNE,

Medical Director.

Books, Pamphlets, &c., received for Review, 1868.

(Continued from Journal of Mental Science, July, 1868).

Books Received.

- 1.—Sea-sickness and How to Prevent it—an Explanation of its Nature and Successful Treatment, through the Agency of the Nervous System, by means of the Spinal Ice-bag, with an Introduction on the General Principles of Neuro-Therapeutics. By John Chapman, M.D. Second Edition, enlarged. Trübner and Co., 1868.

This edition contains a concise and lucid introductory exposition of the Author's pathological and therapeutical doctrines; a section on the Physiology of Vomiting has also been added; and the number of cases showing the successful use of the spinal ice bag in sea-sickness has been increased. It does not, of course, fall within the scope of this Journal to give any opinion on the treatment of sea sickness; but the arguments adduced by Dr. Chapman in the introductory part on the General Principles of Neuro-Therapeutics, have a really practical bearing on the treatment of insanity. We are certainly not prejudiced in favour of Dr. Chapman's opinions; on the contrary, we are rather prejudiced against them; but we think it much to be desired that some one of our readers, who has the opportunities, would give the application of heat and cold to the spinal cord a fair and rigid trial in the treatment of the different forms of insanity. To us it undoubtedly appears that the pathological doctrines of Dr. Chapman are based on insufficient support, and too theoretical; but it may well be that the practice is good, though the reasons given for its success, ingenious as they assuredly are, are not altogether well founded.

- 2.—On the Wasting Diseases of Infants and Children. By Eustace Smith, M.D. London: Physician-Extraordinary to his Majesty the King of the Belgians, &c. James Walton, 1868.