

It is so seldom that we find the military authorities supporting their medical officers in matters of military etiquette and discipline, that we feel bound to put the following paragraph on record. Such a flagrant instance of insubordination could, however, scarcely be passed over, and we sympathize with a member of our profession who innocently is the cause of severe punishment upon one of his own charge, however richly that punishment may be deserved.

“ROYAL MARINES.—On Wednesday morning the officers and men of the Chatham division were drawn up in the barrack square for the purpose of having promulgated the finding and sentence of a district court martial, which assembled two days previously for the trial of A. M'Closkey on the charge of striking his superior officer, Assistant-Surgeon Wm. Conolly, M.D., in the receiving-room, Melville Hospital, on the 24th ultimo. The prisoner was tried on the previous day by a divisional court martial, and sentenced to forty-two days' imprisonment, and he was taken to the hospital to ascertain his fitness to undergo the imprisonment, when he struck the medical officer a violent blow with his clinched fist. The court sentenced the prisoner to receive fifty lashes, and to undergo twelve months' imprisonment in Fort Clarence. The infliction of corporal punishment was carried into effect in the presence of the whole of the division. The prisoner during the punishment cried out most lustily. He was then removed to the hospital to have his back dressed.”

#### MEDICAL OFFICERS OF HEALTH.

THE activity displayed by the medical officers of health in the contingencies arising from the present cattle plague and threatened epidemic of cholera is beyond all praise. The broad manner in which they have apprehended the nature of their duties, and the unwearied energy and zeal they have displayed in executing them and in forewarning and, as far as practicable, prearming their respective districts, give them the highest claim upon the consideration and confidence of the public. It is difficult to open out a daily paper without finding some reference to the important labours of this invaluable, but as yet too limited, body of officials. For example, on the table before us lies a report of a recent public meeting at Hammersmith, called by the indefatigable and able officer of health for Fulham, Mr. Burge, to consider the measures requisite to be adopted with regard to the prevailing epidemic among cattle. Mr. Burge opened the meeting by a clear and effective statement of the nature of the plague, and the means requisite for its restraint. He also discussed the question of the milk supply, and suggested a mode of allaying the public fears as to the use of this important article of food. Dr. Brewer, and Professor Armatage, of the Albert Veterinary College, assisted Mr. Burge, and a sympathetic audience rewarded their efforts.

In another journal we read an elaborate report to the Vestry of Newington by Dr. Iliff, the officer of health for the parish. In this report Dr. Iliff not only details at length the origin and course of the present cattle-plague, and the public measures which have been taken to restrain it, but he also gives a most interesting and valuable account of the great epizootics amongst horned cattle in 1714 and 1745.

Again, a special report on the Prevention of Cholera lies before us, addressed by the medical officer of health for Glasgow, Dr. W. T. Gairdner, to the Board of Police for that city. Dr. Gairdner directs attention chiefly to the influence of impure water in favouring the disease, and the defective distribution of the admirable water-supply from Loch Katrine in certain districts; and to the pollution of the atmosphere arising from middens and ashpits, still numerous in Glasgow.

TESTIMONIAL.—Surgeon-major F. Douglas, M.D., H.M. Indian army, has been presented by his friends in Lucknow with a very handsome silver salver and epergne, value £150, on the occasion of his resigning the appointment of civil surgeon, after an incumbency of seven years, “in testimony of high esteem and regard, and in remembrance of many past kindnesses.”

## The Lancet Sanitary Commission

FOR

INVESTIGATING THE STATE

OF THE

INFIRMARIES OF WORKHOUSES.

REPORTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS.

No. VI.

ST. MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS AND CLERKENWELL.

THE two infirmaries which we are about to describe possess a peculiar interest for the student of hospital hygiene; for they are the worst in all London. Not even St. George-the-Martyr, nor the Strand, though each of these has distinctive demerits which render it sufficiently conspicuous, can rival St. Martin-in-the-Fields and Clerkenwell in that general unsuitableness for hospital purposes which condemns them as fit for nothing but to be destroyed.

#### ST. MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS INFIRMARY.

The feature which first strikes the observer who inspects this infirmary is the remarkable character of the ground on which it stands. The whole workhouse, a gloomy prison-like structure, forms an irregularly foursided enclosure, of which the infirmary proper occupies the south side (immediately behind the National Gallery, from which it is separated only by a narrow court); or rather, the “sick wards” occupy two of the three stories which compose the buildings on this side of the workhouse area. The ground *within* the buildings is raised so much above the level of the surrounding streets that the ground-floor is converted into a basement on that aspect; and this elevation of the ground is due to the circumstance that the site is, in fact, an ancient and well-stocked *churchyard*. This being the case, it would hardly be believed, but is nevertheless true, that the basement floor, with this offensive abutment of churchyard earth blocking up its windows on one side, has been converted into surgical wards, the first floor not being used for infirmary purposes! After such an instance of carelessness in the location of the sick, one is not disposed to expect any great things of the accommodation in the wards themselves, and inspection fully confirms the anticipation. Not one of them is more than 8 ft. 6 in. in height, and the surgical wards are scarcely over 8 ft; the allowance of cubic space per bed, on the average of the four sick wards, is only 428 ft. (little more than one-third of that prescribed in the regulations for the construction of the military hospitals); and the gloomy darkness of the wards, especially those in the basement, is most objectionable. Nothing but the presence of windows on each side of the sick wards prevents them from being intolerably oppressive, for there is no proper system of subsidiary ventilation; and, of course, at those times when, from cold weather or other causes, the windows are obliged to be shut, the atmosphere becomes very offensive. Of the bedsteads and bedding the most that can be said is that they are not conspicuously below the average workhouse standard; but the beds are lumpy and comfortless, the means of washing are extremely deficient, and the waterclosets are decidedly bad.

The faults which are evident in the arrangement of the sick wards are repeated throughout the house. Like most of the metropolitan workhouses, St. Martin's has a population which, without reckoning the nominal “sick,” who are housed in the infirmary, really consists almost entirely of diseased or infirm persons who require more or less of medical attendance. Thus in June last, on the occasion of our first visit, out of a total population of 368, 114 were entered as “sick;” but there was a

total of 256 names on the medical relief books as requiring extra diets, and besides these there were numerous other patients. In short, the condition of the inmates generally is such as demands particular attention to ventilation, and this is precisely the subject which is treated with the most reckless neglect. This fault is universal; ward after ward, which we carefully measured, being greatly below even the Poor-law standard as to the allowance of cubic space; and the attempts at subsidiary ventilation which have from time to time been made are ridiculous. The lying-in ward, the nursery, and the casual wards, may be selected as examples—the badness of the arrangements following a *crescendo* scale. The lying-in department is contained in a single ward on the third story of the main block of the workhouse. The room is awkwardly shaped, a large piece being taken out of its width, at the lower end, by a projection of the wall; but as there are seldom more than six inmates, it happens that there is a much more liberal allowance of cubic space than in most of the other wards. This advantage, however, is utterly neutralized by the fact that there are but two windows and one ventilator: the windows are blocked up by massive wooden screens, which the sapience of the guardians has devised in order to protect the modesty of the gentleman-paupers in the court-yard from possible demonstrations on the part of the unfortunate creatures who are expecting or recovering from their confinement: the one ventilator is a large square hole in the wall, leading into a shaft which goes out through the roof, and the only conceivable use of it is to pour a down-draught of cold air upon the luckless occupant of the labour-bed, which is conveniently placed below it. At night, of course, the windows are snugly closed and the flap of the ventilator turned up, if it be anything like cold weather; and we observed that the nurse had, with careful forethought, *papered over* some meagre ventilating slits in the window panes which might still have permitted some trifling ventilation to go on. With the atmosphere thus produced, and with the additional infliction of being forced to hear the groans of any patient who may be actually in labour, the inmates of the St. Martin's lying-in ward endure a state of things which we suppose no man of the commonest sense or feeling could bear to inflict, unless he were a "guardian of the poor." After all, there is a certain feeling of the ludicrous inspired by the stupidity of these arrangements; for it does not appear that they have yet provoked any such tragical Nemesis as the outbreak of a puerperal fever. It is a very different matter, however, when we come to consider the results of the neglect of ventilation in the nursery. The allowance of cubic space in this apartment is much less ample than in the lying-in ward, and the subsidiary arrangements for ventilation are of the same kind; the atmosphere is extremely foul. Into this room, a few months since, there accidentally came a woman bearing with her the infection of measles, and the result of this, in such a vitiated atmosphere, was a most disastrous outbreak of the disease, in which eight children died: the malady assumed a very virulent type, which must doubtless be referred to the sanitary deficiencies of the apartment. As for the tramp-wards, the only epithet which can be applied to them is—"abominable." The male tramp-ward, in particular, struck us with horrified disgust. We scarcely had a fair glance at it on the occasion of our first visit, being accompanied by the visiting committee (for whose edification, by the way, we strongly suspect it had been furbished up in an unusual manner); but a few days since we revisited it, and the impression produced on our minds is that we have seldom seen such a villanous hole. It is situated completely underground, and is approached by an almost perpendicular flight of stone steps, leading to a grated iron door, through which one passes into an ill-smelling water-closet, which forms the antechamber of *messieurs* the tramps. The apartment at the moment of our entrance (about midday) was being ventilated and cleaned by a very nasty-looking warder. The ventilation-business seemed difficult, for there

is but *one window, closely grated*, to this apartment, in which some sixteen or twenty people sleep, and that is quite close up to the water-closet end. From the other part of the room, in which the beds (or shelves) for the tramps are situated, and in which the nasty-looking man was making feeble movements with a brush, there arose a concentrated vagrant-stink which fairly drove us out, not without threatenings of sickness. The bath-room, in which the "casuals" are facetiously supposed to wash before retiring to rest, is a still more dungeon-like place; or rather (to use a less dignified and more appropriate phrase) it is like a *very* bad beer-cellar, through the obscurity of which one may dimly perceive a tin bath, while one's nose is assaulted by a new and more dreadful stench. Both bath-room and sleeping-room were extremely dirty; and, considering that the allowance of cubic space for each sleeper is but 294 feet under the most favourable circumstances, it is really a marvel that typhus does not spontaneously arise among the temporary inhabitants of this disreputable ward. If any of the tramps fall sick, they are taken up into a miserable ward in a one-storied building at the east end of the premises, and *closely adjoining the dead-house*, in which they are greatly overcrowded when the place happens to be full, and the bed-furniture of which is squalid and mean.

As might be expected in an establishment the managers of which are so neglectful of such important matters as ventilation and the supply of proper water-closets, the nursing arrangements are very insufficient. There is but one paid nurse, a very intelligent and active woman, who confesses that it is impossible for her, even with the most fatiguing exertions, to keep up a really efficient supervision of the house. Her apartment is placed next to the lying-in ward, and far away from the infirmary proper. There is a pauper day-nurse to each ward, and extra nurses are supplied for night duty. The master, who is a very active and conscientious officer, does his best to superintend the ward management generally; and he reports that, in his opinion, the pauper nurses, on the whole, do their duty fairly. But we saw great reason to doubt whether this is the case with regard to the administration of medicines, nor could this be expected, by those who know hospital requirements, from the character and appearance of these females. A good instance of their inefficiency is supplied by the way in which they manage, or rather neglect, the few imbecile patients in the house (who, by the way, are scattered through several different wards); these poor creatures have no suitable employment at all, and it is clear that the attendants of the wards in which they may happen to be have no notion of any such management as might tend to improve their mental state. It must be confessed, however, that the guardians are primarily to blame in this matter, since they have organized no arrangements calculated to be useful to their insane-inmates, and seem to consider them as of no consequence.

The medical attendance on the sick appears to be performed in an exemplary manner by Mr. Skegg, the medical officer; far better, indeed, than the guardians have any right to expect, seeing that they give him only the miserable salary of £120 a year, and out of this sum require him to find drugs of all kinds, and to dispense them. He visits daily, and records all the prescriptions in the ward-books, of which there is one to each ward. We cannot but think that prescription-cards at the bed-heads would be far preferable, as facilitating an easy and accurate reference to the treatment of each case while it is actually under interrogation. There can be no doubt, however, of the medical officer's intelligence and activity; and we are glad to mention, as a somewhat unusual feature in workhouse practice, that he has successfully performed a good number of surgical operations. His treatment of several surgical cases which we saw in the wards was evidently good, as judged by the visible results.

The dietaries of the able-bodied present a rather uninteresting resemblance to other workhouse dietaries, being monoto-

nous, as they usually are, and neither above nor below the workhouse average as to quantity. The sick diets seem to be *bond fide* at the discretion of the medical officer; and from actual specimens which we inspected in the Medical Relief-book, he seems to take proper advantage of this in ordering wine and spirits, and other comforts.

The mortality of the year, extending from July, 1864, to July, 1865, was 84; this number closely approaches the average for the last five years, and was made up as follows:—"Old age," 14; phthisis, 19; nervous diseases, 11; cachectic diseases of infancy, 4; heart and liver diseases, 7; renal disease, 4; pneumonia, 6; chronic bronchitis, 2; pleurisy, 1; croup, 1; disease of bladder, 1; cancer, 1; injury, 1; secondary hæmorrhage after amputation, 1; zymotic diseases, 11 (including measles, 8; typhoid fever, 1; typhus, 1; erysipelas, 1).

In short, the faults of this infirmary are such as rest entirely with the governing body; but these defects are so serious as to make the establishment one of the very worst of the kind. The building, as regards its site and construction, is hopelessly bad, and its natural defects have not been modified by the adoption of proper precautions: for very great overcrowding of the sick and infirm wards has been allowed to take place, and nothing like an effective system of subsidiary ventilation has been carried out. It might be said in extenuation of this supineness on the part of the guardians that the radical defects of the building were such as to render piecemeal improvement useless; but this plea is particularly unfortunate, for in fact the site of the workhouse, which is the freehold property of the parish, might have been sold years ago for a sum of money which would have handsomely repaid the cost of rebuilding in proper style upon a suitable site. It is well known that Nash, the architect of Regent-street, in his day offered £30,000 for the site, besides engaging to rebuild the workhouse, at his own cost, in any situation which the parish might select; and since that time, with the increasing value of land in central portions of the metropolis, it would have been possible, on many occasions, to have secured a far larger price than this. It may be questioned if the property is not worth £60,000 at the present moment. That the guardians, with the full knowledge of these facts, should have committed the gross injustice of retaining a workhouse which is no better than a prison in its structure, and far inferior to a prison in internal comfort and salubrity, is astonishing, since they have always been selected from a higher class of tradesmen, who might be expected to act like men of sense and education, and to be superior to the petty local interests and jealousies which are natural enough in some parishes. At present the opinions of the more enlightened members seem to have prevailed, and there is a general desire to move *somewhere*, which has occasioned the negotiations with Government in the interest of the extension of the National Gallery. But it may well be doubted, much as one might desire that assistance should be given to the Government in acquiring a site which may render the extension or re-erection of the National Gallery possible, whether the guardians are justified in accepting an offer which will bind them to a course, involving, probably, very considerable delay before the removal can actually take place. So bad are the present premises, in a sanitary point of view, that there is nothing, humanly speaking, to prevent a severe outbreak of typhus, or some other infectious disease, the seeds of which are liable at any time to be introduced amongst the inmates (more especially from the tramp-wards), and would probably multiply with the most disastrous effects. Meanwhile there is no doubt that the parish could obtain an instant purchaser at a price which would set them free to commence building immediately, under the best auspices, in some healthy suburb where they might secure ample space for a proper separate infirmary, constructed on true hospital principles, and a suitable isolated fever-house; and we are of opinion that this course

ought to be taken, whether the Government become the purchaser or not. No board of guardians in the world has the right to retain sick paupers a day longer than is absolutely necessary in such a building as the present workhouse of St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

Our opinion is so decidedly in favour of immediate removal as the only efficient remedy for the existing evils of this infirmary that we deem it useless to recapitulate all the defects which demand immediate attention, if it were right to speculate on a stay of more than a very few months. But even in the event of so short a remaining occupancy there are three points which ought to be instantly remedied. Additional means of ventilation should be supplied to *all* the wards. The water-closets ought to be entirely rebuilt, and their ventilation and cleansing provided for in a more effective manner. And the present tramp-wards should be instantly abolished. It would probably be better to remove the casual department to some independent building; but at any rate the present wards ought to be immediately closed, after plentiful purification with chloride of lime; for they constitute a repository of foul air, and a possible source of infectious disease, which is a great and threatening danger to the whole establishment. As for the other most needful reforms—in the character of the nursing department, the position and remuneration of the medical officer, and the supply of medicines, they are so obvious, and we have so often insisted upon these topics in speaking of other workhouses, that we need only refer the guardians to our published opinions, and to the dictates of their own common sense. It may fairly be hoped, that when these officials have purged themselves of their greatest offence, by removal to a proper site and a suitable building, their returning self-respect will ensure their behaving with common honesty to the sick poor and to their hard-worked medical attendant.

P.S.—Since writing the above, we learn that the guardians have recently increased the medical officer's salary from £120 to £150—a measure which does credit to their sense of justice.

#### CLERKENWELL INFIRMARY.

If the infirmary of St. Martin-in-the-Fields be very bad, there can be no question that the infirmary of Clerkenwell is worse: in fact, we here touch the lowest point in the scale of metropolitan workhouse hospitals.

The parish of Clerkenwell elects its guardians and manages its workhouse under a special local Act of Parliament, and it has certainly abused to the uttermost the opportunities for evading necessary reforms which are created by this position of affairs. The workhouse, in which there exists no trace of a proper separate infirmary, is a tall, gloomy brick building, consisting of two long parallel blocks separated from each other by a flagged court-yard not more than fifteen or twenty feet wide. The front and principal block does enjoy one fair outlook towards a wide street; but in other respects the whole house is closely environed with buildings only less gloomy and unwholesome-looking than itself. The hinder block, especially, wears an aspect of squalid poverty and meanness; and it is very old, dating from 1729. Both blocks are four stories in height. Entering either part of the house, we are at once struck with the frowsiness of the atmosphere which meets us; and we find the cramped winding staircases, interrupted by all manner of inconvenient landings and doors, which in these old buildings render the stairs a special nuisance, instead of an effective source of ventilation for the building, as they should be. Detailed examination of the sick wards implies detailed inspection of the whole house; for the sick, infirm, insane, and "able-bodied" wards are jumbled side by side, and the whole place presents the dismal appearance of a prison hospital—not such as one meets with in civil life, but the sort of makeshift which might perhaps be seen in a garrison town in war-time, except that in the latter situation one would not be annoyed