

THE CARE OF THE INSANE.

The Local Government Board inquiry into the St. Pancras lunacy scandals has brought to light a system of wholesale bribery, for no other words can describe the venality of a system which enables the relieving officers to take fees from medical men called in to certify on cases of lunacy—and gifts in cash and kind from the owners of licensed asylums. This degrading condition of affairs has apparently been in vogue from time immemorial, and perhaps one might be permitted to ask why Sir James Crichton Browne and his fellow Visitors in Lunacy have never found out this grave "moral delinquency" upon the part of persons and institutions under their inspection. The report of the Board of Trade in the present case will be of vast interest and importance to the community, and will be awaited with anxiety.

ACTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD.

The Local Government Board has just addressed an important circular to Metropolitan Boards of Guardians on the subject of the recent lunacy scandals. In it the Board states that there is reason to believe that the system of relieving officers receiving payment from medical officers and proprietors of licensed houses for the certification and removal of lunatics prevails elsewhere than in two Metropolitan Unions.

The Board adds that it regards the practice of giving and receiving payments as altogether indefensible, and considers that no officer offending in this respect in future should be allowed to retain office—whilst not condoning the past. The Board then asks Guardians to ascertain whether officers in the Union have been guilty of the practice, and, further, the number of lunatics in public and private asylums, and the reason particular licensed houses had been chosen.

THE RATING OF HOSPITALS.

A select Committee of the House of Commons presided over by Mr. T. W. Russell, Parliamentary Secretary to the Local Government Board, has agreed to a report strongly recommending that local authorities should be empowered to exempt from rating all hospitals within their jurisdiction which are maintained by voluntary contributions.

Where such exemption is not granted the Committee would favour an appeal to the

County Council, who, they think, should then be entitled to enforce exemption.

These recommendations were only passed by a majority.

The Chairman had previously presented a draft report (which was rejected) against any exemption, on the ground that if the principle were conceded it would require to be carried to inordinate lengths.

This finding of the Select Committee is a great triumph for the London Hospitals Council which brought the matter before Parliament and is proof of the benefit of co-operation between the Governors and Staffs of the various hospitals as against centralising authority in the hands of an independent and irresponsible body like the Prince of Wales' Fund.

NURSES FOR THE MIDDLE CLASSES.

The nursing of the middle classes is a problem which has of late engaged considerable attention, and various methods have been devised for meeting the difficulties of those who do not require constant attendance, and who cannot afford the full fees commanded by a well trained nurse. The most feasible and satisfactory of these is that visiting, or daily nurses, as they are usually called, should attend once or twice a day, by the hour, upon middle-class patients, for a fixed fee, as district nurses do upon the poor. This plan has been tried, with some degree of success, both in this country and in the United States, and could be much further extended did the public show its desire for the services of such daily nurses. But the position taken up by a medical man, in an interview with a contemporary is as ungenerous as it is undesirable. Briefly, it is that the reputation of medical men suffers if their patients are not properly nursed, so nurses they must have. But nurses are paid far too highly, and a cheap (and inefficient) person must take the place of the well-trained woman. As more than one paper has pointed out "there are many women now without employment, and who exist without fulfilling any useful place in society. They are supernumeraries at home, they dislike the idea of becoming servants or even shopgirls." This is an undeniable fact, but does it strike the public that the young woman who dislikes becoming a servant will make an ideal nurse? Hardly. The medical man who advances her claims to training on this ground will do well to find some more cogent argument.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)