

Reflections.

FROM A BOARD ROOM MIRROR.



The Royal Commission upon the Poor-Law have asked the London County Council for their views on the reform of London's Poor-Law administration. One or two prominent Municipal Reform members of the Council will give evidence before the Commission at an early date. It is understood that the plan most favoured by Reformers is to hand over the present duties of boards of guardians to the city and borough councils, the Poor-Law schools to the London Education Committee, and to constitute a Statutory Committee of the London County Council for the purpose of administering central Poor-Law matters. This Central Committee would absorb the powers and duties of the Asylums' Committee and of the Metropolitan Asylums Board. By this scheme the advantages of local knowledge and experience, so necessary to efficient Poor-Law work, are preserved, while the central authority will exercise a careful supervision and secure economy and uniformity of administration.

The Metropolitan Asylums' Board decided on Saturday to increase the salaries of each of its nine senior medical superintendents to £800 per annum from March 26th next, and to make increases in the salaries of three other members of the medical staff. The Hospitals Committee, who made the recommendation, state that it must be recognised that in recent years the work of the Board's hospitals has grown both in volume, in importance, and in public confidence.

It is satisfactory that good work should receive recognition. The Medical Superintendents are to be congratulated. Our only regret is that the Metropolitan Asylums' Board has failed to realise, by their attitude towards their excellent Matrons, the part contributed by them to the general improvement of our Metropolitan Fever Hospitals.

Lady Ludlow has received a donation of £150 from Sir Trevor Lawrence towards the building of a new nurses' home in connection with St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

It is officially intimated at Portsmouth that the Royal opening of the new Alexandra Military Hospital on the southern slopes of Portsdown Hill, near Portsmouth, has been abandoned. The institution was to have been opened by Her Majesty the Queen, and had it been possible to delay the ceremony until the warmer weather the original programme would have been carried out.

The Minister of Agriculture has decided to create a radium-bathing institution at Joachimsthal, in Bohemia, in order to utilise radium-water for therapeutic purposes.

Our Foreign Letter.

A VISIT TO TWO INDIAN HOSPITALS.



Probably all the English nursing world knows Lady Dufferin's name in connection with Indian hospitals.

Owing to her active interest the number and efficiency of hospitals for women in India was greatly increased, and of these the Lady Dufferin and Lady Lyall Hospital, at Agra, stands in the first rank.

Mrs. Stout, the Matron, went round the wards with us, and gave me many interesting statistics. The Purdah Ward was first visited. Purdah is Hindi for curtain, and has come to mean "behind the curtain," for all Indian women of high caste must be entirely secluded from the gaze of men other than their own nearest relations. Therefore there is a Purdah Ward in all hospitals for Indian women. These high-caste patients pay eight annas a day, eightpence in English money, during their stay in the Purdah Ward. The back door of each separate room in this ward gave on to a courtyard entirely "purdah," where the convalescent patients could sit out of doors, and where their food was specially prepared for them in separate cook-houses.

Each ward in this large hospital has a building to itself in the extensive compound. Space is a necessity in hot climates, and in passing one may remark that Indian houses strike the newcomer as chiefly consisting of large doors and windows, which usually stand wide open, with just a chik—i.e., reed blind let down between the interior of the room and the outside world. The doors have bolts and locks which are fastened at night, but as often as not the bolts and locks do not work properly. On the other hand there is always a night-watchman—the choki-dar—who utters unearthly hues and cries at judicious intervals during the night to show that he is awake and on guard!

All the wards are on the ground floor; there is no upper storey. The ward for phthisis patients is in the nature of a cage, having open woodwork walls, or rather screens, so that the patients are practically in the open air, yet well protected from the sun and damp during the rainy season. There are 20 beds in this ward, and each patient is allowed five blankets. Phthisis is but too common in India, the enormous variations of climate during the twenty-four hours, in the cold season, may partly account for this. Imagine a maximum sun temperature of 130 degs. Fahrenheit, and a mean temperature in the shade on the grass, within that short space of time of 21 degs. Fahrenheit!

The hospital has 70 beds, but at the time of my visit there were only 57 inmates. The operating room, dispensary, and office, are again in a separate house. The fittings of the operation-room

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)