THE "OPEN-DOOR" SYSTEM AND THE RISK OF PROSECUTION.

In May last a female patient escaped from the Lenzie Asylum, Glasgow, through an unlocked door, and was killed—whether suicidally or not is unknown—on the railway near the Asylum.

The Public Prosecutor for the County has intimated to the Asylum authorities that if such an accident occurs again it may be his duty to institute an investigation as to whether there has not been culpable negligence in the custody of the lunatic; and the husband of the deceased woman has, we observe, raised an action against the managers of the Asylum for damages for the loss of his wife. The managers have compromised this action by a payment of £50 to the husband. A very serious question is thus raised, and one which involves the increase of the already sufficiently heavy risks and anxieties of asylum physicians. We believe that during the last year the number of suicides in Scotch Asylums has been unusually large. Is this a mere coincidence, or is it associated with the granting of a greater amount of liberty?

CHANGES IN THE LUNACY BOARD.

Early in July Dr. Nairne, who had held the appointment of Commissioner in Lunacy since 1857, resigned his seat at the Board. The vacancy was so quickly filled up that the resignation of Dr. Nairne and the appointment of his successor, Dr. Reginald Southey, of London, were announced at the same time.

We are sure that the best wishes of Dr. Nairne's numerous friends attend him in his retirement from his very protracted term of service.

Obituary.

B. H. EVERTS, M.D.

Doctor B. H. Everts died at Arnhem, on the 2nd of July, 1883.

He was born in 1810, and after having passed through a grammar school took his degree at the University of Leyden. His medical studies were interrupted in 1830 by the war with Belgium; he joined the corps of volunteers formed by the Leyden students. After having taken his medical degree he settled at Deventer, and there held the position of Superintendent of the Lunatic Asylum (1844).

The provincial government of North Holland having resolved to build an asylum, Everts was appointed to be Medical Superintendent, and he devoted the time between 1847, while Meerenberg was being built, and 1849, when it was opened, to visiting several foreign asylums.

In England he was greatly interested in the non-restraint system, and it was only natural that his humane nature warmly supported it. The result was that he decided upon introducing it into the Meerenberg Asylum, and thanks to his care this was the first asylum on the Continent of Europe where it was introduced. We were much pleased with his asylum in visiting it in 1853.

It may be said that he loved his work and his patients, and to his attachment to them, it must be ascribed that he refused a call to Amsterdam where a chair of pathology was offered him.

Dr. Everts resigned his position as Superintendent in 1874, and spent the rest of his days at Arnhem.

In him the profession loses a devoted member.

ROBERT BOYD, M.D. EDIN.

On the 14th of August, 1883, at his Private Asylum, Southall Park, Middlesex, in the fire by which the building was destroyed, Dr. Boyd, aged 75.

Dr. Boyd was the son of Captain William Boyd (South Devon Militia), and

was born Nov. 24, 1808, at Tullamore, King's Co., Ireland. He was M.D. Edin. 1831, L.R.C.P. Lond. 1836, F.R.C.P. 1852. He was formerly Lecturer on Medicine at the Charlotte Street School of Medicine, and Resident Physician at the Marylebone Infirmary, which he left June, 1847, on his appointment to the Somerset County Asylum. He resigned in 1868, leaving Wells in July. He took Southall Park Asylum January, 1874. He survived his wife only a few months.—(*See Occasional Notes of the Quarter.*)

Correspondence.

To the Editors of THE JOURNAL OF MENTAL SCIENCE.

GENTLEMEN,—The proposal of Dr. Ingleby to lift the floor of the chancel of the church of Stratford-on-Avon, where Shakespeare is known to lie, has aroused some ill-considered objections from the daily newspapers, some of which threaten "a storm of indignation" against all who wish the project carried out. It is one which I have often talked about to my friends, and which I have even thought of proposing in your Journal, so I hope that you will allow me to bespeak the influence of scientific men in support of Dr. Ingleby and those who are disposed to take his part.

In spite of such words as "bad taste," "sacrilege," and "desecration," I do not believe that any person within the British Isles would shed a single tear, or eat an ounce less of beef and potatoes, or drink a pint more beer, because a few stones were lifted in the floor of the church and the light of day allowed to fall on the honoured bones of the great dramatist. The argument most likely to tell with the public is that Shakespeare himself, in the doggerel rhyme inscribed on his tomb, requested that his bones should not be moved. In a life of Shakespeare in my copy of his works, published twenty-four years ago, the following commentary is made :—"It is uncertain whether this request and imprecation were written by Shakespeare or by one of his friends. They probably allude to the custom of removing skeletons after a certain time and depositing them in charnel houses, and similar execrations are found in many Latin epitaphs." This simple observation disposes of all the arguments drawn from the inscription. To all appearance Shakespeare was quite unconscious of the immortality he had gained. Assuredly he never considered the question whether he ought to forbid that his cranial outline should be examined hundreds of years after in order to repair the neglect of his contemporaries, who have left us in doubt as to what he was like when he lived.

It seems to me that the two portraits of Shakespeare presented in engravings are taken from two different men, one a very handsome and fine face, somewhat like a Spaniard, the other a much more English looking countenance, resembling the bust on the wall of the church. Of this bust we are neither sure that it was taken before Shakespeare was buried, nor that the sculptor could be trusted to make a good likeness. There is no doubt that his bones might be identified, when measurements and observations could be made that would be useful in deciding which of the portraits most resembled the illustrious dead. In the name of common-sense, what is there in Shakespeare dead that his remains should be for ever kept under an opaque slab of sandstone, never to be seen by the living even for a few hours, when anyone dwelling in London at the beginning of the seventeenth century might see him on the boards of the Globe Theatre for a few pence? A few years ago the grave of Dante was opened, and anthropologists now know the capacity of the cranium and the probable weight of the brain of the great Florentine.

The body of Richard II. was examined, and the story of his being brained by a pole-axe proved to be untrue. The remains of Charles I. were also examined, and the decapitated head was found to retain a striking likeness to the well-known portraits of Vandyke. And what are Richard II. and Charles I. to us