

PART IV.—NOTES AND NEWS.

Memorandum submitted to the Commissioners in Lunacy by the Committee of the Association of Medical Officers of Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane, on the Question of the Retiring Allowances to Officers and Servants of County Asylums, at an interview at their Office in Whitehall Place, on the 2nd December, 1863.

At the annual meeting of the Association of Medical Officers of Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane, held at the Royal College of Physicians on the 9th of July last, a committee was appointed to consider the arrangements made under the Lunacy Acts Amendment Act, 1862, for "the superannuation of officers in asylums." This committee determined to seek the counsel and advice of the Commissioners in Lunacy on the subject, fully recognising the uniform desire and the efforts of the Commissioners, to improve in every way the position and standing of the medical officers of the county asylums. The committee consequently authorised Dr. Robertson to convey their wishes to your secretary, and to solicit an interview, and they desire now to acknowledge the ready compliance with which you have met their request.

The Association feel grateful for the liberal spirit shown by the Legislature towards them in the provisions of the Act in question, by which the period of service has been reduced from twenty to fifteen years, and the important proviso made that the value of the lodgings, rations, and other allowances, may be had regard to in fixing the retirement to be granted.

The Association consider these provisions fair and liberal, and they desire to acknowledge their obligations to the Commissioners, and specially to the Earl of Shaftesbury, for the practical interest thus shown in their welfare.

The Association feel, however, that this privilege has been in a great measure neutralized by the addition to the clause requiring the sanction of the quarter sessions to the proposed new retirement allowances. They unanimously would rather have left the retirement clause of the 16 and 17 Vict., cap. 97, sec. 57, untouched, than had—even with the more favorable terms—this appeal made to the quarter sessions.

The Association are content that the retirement should be at the discretion of the Committee of Visitors. The medical officers of the county asylums gladly trust herein the liberality of those under whose control they work, and who are competent judges of the value of their services. The case, however, assumes a very different aspect when the amount of the retirement is to be debated and fixed by the justices in quarter sessions. The frequent and unpleasant discussions on the prison and constabulary expenditure (which are directly under the control of the quarter sessions) are not encouraging.

The justices in the quarter sessions are so little conversant with the detail arrangements of the county asylum that they are unable to enter into the extent of the claims of the medical officer on a liberal treatment in all pecuniary matters. Moreover the legitimate pressure for economy exerted by the rate-payers (of whose heavy burthens the Association are well aware) tends to place difficulties in the way of a satisfactory settlement of this question by the sessions.

The Association venture to think that if the approval of the Commissioners were required to any recommendation of the committee of visitors proposing a retiring allowance, and if the same could be made chargeable on the Consolidated Fund instead of on the county rate, a sufficient guarantee would be given to the public, and a relief afforded to the property rated for the county expenditure, while the claims of the Association would they know be fully and fairly considered by the Commissioners. It is in the remembrance of the Association that the late Chancellor of the Exchequer (the Right Hon. B. Disraeli) proposed thus to transfer the whole expenditure of the county asylums to the Consolidated Fund as a just relief to the landed interest now bearing an unfair proportion of the cost incurred for the care and treatment of the insane poor.

The Association would refer to the recent retirement of Dr. Williams, in illustration of the unsatisfactory working of the present act.

Instead of granting two thirds of his salary and allowances, which would represent a sum of £450, the committee proposed to the sessions a retirement of £300 only. Yet, if ever there were a case in which the most liberal measure should have been meted out, Dr. Williams was that case. His health was shattered by a severe accident received in the direct discharge of his duties. Moreover his management of the Asylum had received the unvarying praise alike of the visiting justices and of the Commissioners during the seventeen years of his service. The Association cannot but think that such a precedent must act most unfavorably on their future prospects herein.

The Association had hoped to have been represented on this occasion by their revered ex-president Dr. Conolly, and they grieve that severe bodily indisposition forbids his presence here to-day. In a letter received from him by Dr. Robertson on the 1st instant, the following remarks bearing on this question occur:—

“It is fortunate that some of the Commissioners know what the nature of *life in a lunatic asylum* is. If the superintendent is qualified by his *disposition* as well as his acquirements for such a life and all its duties, *ten* years will do their work upon him.”

The Association would, in conclusion, quote the following remark on the clause in question, contained in an able analysis, by a distinguished author and Physician of the Lunacy Acts Amendment Act, 1862, in ‘The Journal of Mental Science’ for October, 1862.

“The 12th section will prove a great disappointment to the officers of asylums, since it refers to their superannuation, and since the latter part of it contains a provision which more than neutralizes the good intentions of the clause as it originally stood. The clause as it stood for which the officers of asylums were indebted to Lord Shaftesbury reduced the term of service for which a pension could be granted to them from twenty years to fifteen years, and provided that in calculating the amount of superannuation, regard may be had to the lodgings, rations, or other allowances enjoyed. In committee, the following rider was attached, under which we have no hesitation in saying, that no superintendent will ever enjoy a superannuation until he has a foot and a half in the grave, or unless he has had the good fortune to serve in some small homogeneous county in which the visitors completely rule the courts of session, and we fear we may also add, in which he has been more studious to make friends than to do his duty. The rider runs thus:—‘Provided that no annuity by way of superannuation granted by the visitors of any asylum under the provisions of this Act or of the Lunacy Act, chapter 97, shall be chargeable on or payable out of the rates of any county until such annuity shall have been confirmed by a resolution of the justices of such county, in general or quarter sessions assembled.’”

In thus submitting their views on this question of the retirement allowances to officers of county asylums, the Association desire at the same time

to solicit the advice of the Commissioners as to the steps by which it may be practicable to place the matter on a footing more satisfactory to those whose pecuniary interests are so involved therewith.

LONDON, Dec. 2, 1863.

Chronic Lunatics.—Arrangements for their Removal from Asylums to Workhouses.

(Minute by the Commissioners in Lunacy.)

November, 1863.

The Board had under further consideration the provisions of the 'Lunacy Acts Amendment Act,' 1862, § 8, as explained by the 2nd section of the 'Lunacy Acts Amendment Act,' 1863, empowering the visitors of any asylum, with the approval of the Commissioners in Lunacy and the President of the Poor Law Board, to make arrangements with the guardians of any parish or union within the district for which the asylum has been provided for the removal from the asylum to the workhouse of such parish or union, and the reception and care therein of a limited number of chronic lunatics, chargeable to the same, or any other parish or union.

Resolved as follows—

I. The arrangements authorised are, in the opinion of the Board, intended to meet the deficiency of accommodation in asylums, and to enable visitors, in special cases, to make provision for the immediate reception into the asylums of all recent and probably curable cases. The Legislature clearly did not contemplate the reception into workhouses generally of the chronic patients referred to, and the constitution thereby of a number of small lunatic establishments; but the selection by the visitors of one or more workhouses, in which adequate accommodation, care, and attendance can be ensured. Consequently, all applications for the approval of the Commissioners must originate with visitors of asylums; and no such application, received directly from a board of guardians, can be entertained.

II. Proper rules and regulations, modified according to circumstances, will be required to be prepared and approved. In the mean time the Board consider and determine that the following conditions are (amongst others) indispensable, and will, in all cases, be insisted on, viz.—

1. Separate wards—properly constructed, arranged, and furnished for the patients of the respective sexes. The dormitories to be distinct from the day-rooms, and the former to afford cubical space per patient, of 500 feet, and the latter 400. Single bed-rooms to contain at least 600 cubic feet.

2. A liberal dietary, analogous to that of the asylums.

3. Ample means of outdoor exercise and recreation.

4. Due medical visitation.

5. Properly qualified paid attendants.

6. Medical and other registers; records similar to those in use in licensed houses.

The English Lunatic Hospitals.

"Of the fifteen or eighteen 'Lunatic Hospitals' in England, the majority are defective in their building, and seem to be restricted in usefulness by insufficient incomes. There are two, however, which are generally conceded to be among the best of their class, apparently containing every essential desideratum for the highest success. One of these, the Manchester Hos-