

were insane, and when the latter visited him said he was an impostor. He also said that the person who visited him there (the nephew) was not the same individual who had visited him at his home; that he could with difficulty recognise that his doctor who visited him there was the man he really knew; and that the house of a neighbour was an asylum. He acknowledged that he had made a fresh will, and said that it had now received the sanction of the Lord Chancellor, "or whoever was the proper authority." He died in the institution on October 18th, having become demented.

A "caveat" was entered against the will made in July, 1899, and another was also entered by the executors of the will of 1899. The money having been left to charities and not to individuals, it became the function of the Attorney-General, as representing the public, to consider the facts on behalf of the charitable bodies to whom the property was left. On consideration of the proofs which could be produced of the patient's insanity during the previous three years, the evidence of insanity shown in the medical certificates and in my report of his condition on my visit to him at the Holloway Sanatorium, on July 26th, 1899, the Attorney-General concluded that the evidence of insanity at the time when the will of July 3rd, 1899, was made was so strong that there would be no likelihood of its being successfully upheld, and therefore he decided not to oppose probate of the will made in 1892.

The case was brought before the Probate Division on February 12th, 1900. Evidence was given by the clerk to the firm of solicitors who prepared the will of 1892 as to due execution of such will; by the nephew as to the deceased's insanity in March, 1899, and in July before his admission to the Holloway Sanatorium; and by me as to his insanity at my visit. No evidence was brought forward in favour of his being of sound disposing mind in July, 1899, and the judge found that he was insane at the time of execution of the second will, that of 1892 being allowed to stand.

In this case the evidence of such insanity as to vitiate the will of 1899 was so strong that there was no case on the other side. The patient's mind was so possessed by the delusion that his relatives were insane that he was unable to take their claims into consideration. It will be noted that there was evidence of "eccentricity," not improbably amounting to insanity, existing at the time of execution of the first will; but apparently the testamentary capacity had not been affected by it.

#### APHASIA AND WILL-MAKING.

An interesting case, lately heard in the Probate Court before the President, Sir Francis Jeune, is noticed as an occasional article on p. 320.—ED.

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#### ASYLUM NEWS.

##### THE COST OF ASYLUMS.

The London County Council lately considered a report by the General Purposes Committee upon the increased cost over the estimates of the Bexley and Horton Asylums. It appears from the discussion that the "estimates" were rather of the nature of a sum which, at the time, it was hoped might prove sufficient, and was rather intended as a check upon extravagance than as a figure arrived at by measuring up of quantities and the careful analysis of specifications. The Committee of Inquiry assert that there has been good value for money, and that the urgent demand for accommodation, and the excessive cost of boarding cases out of London, justified the pressing forward of the erections with as little delay as possible. Comparing the cost per head at the Bexley Asylum with that at other recently constructed asylums, it is clear that the actual cost has not been excessive. At Claybury the cost per bed was £236, at the new West Somerset Asylum £377, while the projected North Stafford Asylum is estimated to cost for the building alone £280 per bed. It is stated that the Asylums Committee is considering the propriety of varying the stereotyped plan of erecting huge palatial buildings for the insane in favour of detached residences.

## THE PRIVATE CLASS OF INSANE.

The London County Council has recently announced to medical practitioners that it has provided accommodation for about sixty female patients having a legal settlement in the county of London at the Manor House, Horton, Epsom, at a weekly charge, as at present fixed, of 15s., exclusive of clothing and special luxuries. Full particulars can be obtained from Mr. R. W. Partridge, clerk of the Asylums Committee. At the Claybury Asylum provision is also made for private patients who can claim a settlement in the county of London at a charge of 30s. a week, and for others at a charge of £2. This action of the London County Council has our hearty approval. Similar arrangements have been made in other counties, and the results have proved satisfactory in affording most needful accommodation to the poorer class of the private insane.

## HOURS OF DUTY OF ASYLUM ATTENDANTS.

Another report brought before the London County Council by the Asylums Committee, dealt with the hours of duty of the nursing staff. It recommended that no reduction should at present be made. Day attendants are on duty fourteen hours (6 a.m. to 8 p.m.) for six days a week. One day a week is allowed off duty, and twelve days annual leave is granted. Night attendants are on duty for ten hours per diem. Any attempt to introduce a system of three shifts of eight hours each is regarded as impracticable, and the superintendents are unanimous against the reduction of the daily hours of duty. To allow two days off a week would cost £17,600 per annum, and would mean the enhanced weekly cost for each patient of 10s. 5d., instead of 9s. 11d., as at present. The Chairman of the Committee, after defending the report, concluded by offering to take it back for further consideration. The general opinion appeared to be against fourteen hours duty a day—at any rate in some of the most exacting wards,—and the Council seemed to doubt whether all possible methods of effecting reduction had received due consideration at the hands of the Asylums Committee.

We do not learn, however, that any suggestion of a way out of the difficulty was made. A committee of the Scottish Division is at present considering this and similar matters of importance in regard to administrative details, and a special meeting will be called to receive their report on Saturday, the 2nd June. We trust that there will be a full attendance when these questions come up for debate.

## DEFICIENT ASYLUM ACCOMMODATION IN LANCASHIRE.

At the meeting of the Bolton Board of Guardians on November 23rd the Chairman called attention to the provision for lunatics in the Bolton Union. At the present time, he said, the asylums in Lancashire were full, and it was necessary to send imbeciles into other counties. There were 611 lunatics in the Bolton Union, and of these 557 were in Lancashire at the asylums of Prestwich, Whittingham, Lancaster, Rainhill, and Winwick, and 54 were outside, including 20 in Hull, 6 in Birmingham, and others in Ipswich, Carmarthen, Derby, Northampton, and elsewhere. Not only was the inconvenience entailed by the distance very great to the officials of the Board and the relatives of the lunatics, but the question of cost was very important. The expense at Prestwich, for example, was 8s. 9d. per week for each lunatic, whereas at the asylums in other counties something like 25s. was the charge imposed. He moved—"That the Bolton Board of Guardians respectfully suggests that the Lancashire Joint Asylums Board should make provision, either temporary or otherwise, for lunatics belonging to this Union at present placed in asylums outside the county." The new asylum at Winwick would on its completion be entirely filled. They ought to build another large asylum, but so far as he knew they had not commenced. It took about five years to build an asylum, and therefore for several years to come they in Bolton would be under the necessity of sending lunatics all over the country. That some temporary accommodation, at least, should be provided, was a very reasonable request. The resolution was adopted.

At the quarterly meeting of the Lancashire Asylums Board held on August 24th, letters were read from the guardians of the Prestwich, Rochdale, Stockport, and

Chorlton Unions complaining of the lack of accommodation in the asylums of the Board. The Chairman said that the letters pointed to the fact that before long they would have to look out for a site for a sixth asylum. The Winwick asylum would not be finished for eighteen months or so. The provision made for epileptics and harmless cases differs much in different unions. Blackburn deserves commendation, for with 908 inmates in the workhouse provision has been made for 187 of these cases. The Bolton guardians "were, perhaps, the worst offenders in this respect, for with 1156 inmates in their workhouse they provided for 18."

At the meeting of the Chorlton Union Board on September 1st, the Chairman, Dr. J. M. Rhodes, stated that the proportion of paupers in that union was 1 in 52 persons, the average for Lancashire being 1 in 53, while that for England and Wales was 1 in 39. He thought the figures showed that there was a large amount of thrift, and that the people in the district were improving in social position, but those statistics relating to lunacy were a matter for regret. In the Lancashire workhouses they had only an increase of 220, but the number in the asylums had risen from 7930 to 8561. The Chorlton Board provide for their own harmless imbeciles and epileptics, and there are 306 in their own workhouse. He was sorry that some unions did not make similar provision, for it was unjust to such unions as Chorlton, Blackburn, Prestwich, Manchester, and Salford, and though they had been asking for justice on this question for many years "the Local Government Board turned a deaf ear to all they had to say." One of the guardians said that the question of providing temporary accommodation for lunatics should be constantly impressed on the Lancashire Asylums Board. Dr. Rhodes stated that the increase of insanity was such that according to some of the best authorities they ought to be building a new asylum every year.

A similar difficulty exists in Cheshire. Although £90,000 were lately spent in enlarging the Upton asylum at Chester, proposals have been recently made to grant £70,000 for the enlargement at Annet. The plan consists of a detached infirmary for 206 patients, an epileptic ward for 50 patients, and a nurses' home.

#### LANCASHIRE ASYLUMS BOARD RATE.

In the Court of Appeal, 22nd January last, judgment was given in the case of the Lancashire Asylums Board *v.* the Manchester Corporation as to whether the Lancashire Asylums Board in estimating the amount required by them annually from the county of Lancashire and the county boroughs therein, should divide it between them in proportion (1) to their assessable value, or (2) according to their rateable value under the Agricultural Rates Act, 1896. The Asylums Board contended that it was now their duty to take as the basis of the division to be made by them the assessable value of the county and county boroughs as specified by the Rating Act of 1896, in place of the rateable values as calculated under the Local Government Act, 1888. The Corporation of Manchester, however, contended that these assessable values have no operation except for the levying of rates, and that as the Asylums Board was not an authority for levying rates they ought to base their calculations on the rateable values found as they were before the passing of the Rating Act, 1896, which, as they contended, operated on the amount so apportioned to each council after it was so apportioned and not before. The Court answered question one in the negative and question two in the affirmative. The appeal of the Corporation was therefore allowed.

#### IMBECILE CHILDREN IN LONDON.

It would seem from a complaint by the Shoreditch and St. Saviour's Board of Guardians of the "grave inconvenience and annoyance" caused by the lack of accommodation for imbecile children, communicated to the Metropolitan Asylums Board, that further provision for this class is required. It is to be hoped that the educable imbeciles at Darent (about 400 in number) will be separated by removal to a distinct establishment. The operation of the new Act relating to defective children will have an effect upon this question, and more time should not be lost in setting to work.

#### OPERATIONS ON THE INSANE IN ASYLUMS.

The Paris correspondent of the *Lancet* reports that this question has been under discussion at the Society of Legal Medicine, the subject having been introduced

some six months ago in an important paper by M. Picqué and M. Briand. They came to the conclusion that the surgeon should only interfere in cases of absolute urgency. M. Leredu, a barrister, sent in a report to the Society on the question formulated as follows:—"Is a surgeon within his rights in performing a surgical operation upon a lunatic without the consent of the patient's relatives?" He answered in the negative, except in a case of absolute urgency. A lunatic is unable to give consent; it is his relatives who must give consent to the operation. But the relatives may refuse consent, possibly from fear of an unsuccessful result, or, on the other hand, with the deliberate wish to deprive a person who is a disgrace and expense to them of a chance of life. Again, the relatives may not choose to answer, or the lunatic may have no relatives. It is, then, the legislature that must be asked to supply an answer to the question. It would be easy to settle it by an enactment drawn in some such terms as these: "When a surgeon is of opinion that surgical interference is called for in the case of a person who is an inmate of a lunatic asylum, he shall obtain leave to operate from the relatives of the patient. In case the relatives refuse, the director of the asylum shall at once inform the Procureur of the Republic. This official shall put the tribunal in possession of the facts, whereupon it may rule the case to be one of urgency and the proposed operation to be a last resource, making the order in the *Chambre de Conseil*, after having referred the matter, should it think fit, to medico-legal experts for an opinion as to the propriety of surgical intervention." M. Picqué, in supporting the opinion of M. Leredu, showed how difficult it was to obtain a really valid consent from relatives. In twenty cases where he applied for leave he received but one answer. The disagreeable consequences (which may arise to a surgeon through operating without consent) being taken for granted, M. Picqué would only dispense with such consent in the three following instances: suffocation, strangulated hernia, and arterial hæmorrhage. There might be others, such as metrorrhagia and conditions associated with the urinary organs, but so long as the matter was not settled, either by statute or by a resolution of the Society, he would not interfere, unless he had some authorisation in writing, for fear of incurring both moral and material responsibilities, which in France were very grave. If the patient were to die his relatives, who had shown themselves absolutely indifferent when permission was asked of them, would not hesitate to claim damages and to attack the surgeon in the public prints. Even if the operation were successful the surgeon would not be free from the risk of disagreeable consequences. In the discussion which followed, without any conclusion being then arrived at, it was curious to see the legal members, among whom was M. Jacobi, the Advocate-General, giving their opinion that it was right for the surgeon to operate if he thought it necessary, even against the wishes of the relatives, while the medical members were less bold and demanded some legal protection to cover their responsibility. As a matter of fact, despite the philanthropic and philosophic views of individual members of the magistracy, the medical profession know only too well how of late these very magistrates have, when sitting in court, shown themselves both severe and unfair towards medical men, and how ready they are to entertain complaints from the relatives of patients against their medical advisers.

#### WOUNDED SOLDIERS IN SCOTLAND.

We note that the Board of Directors of the Crichton Royal Institution, Dumfries, have offered to accommodate ten wounded soldiers from South Africa, preferably men suffering from nervous disorders.

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#### AFTER-CARE ASSOCIATION.

The annual meeting was held on February 19th, at the house of Dr. Blandford, who presided. The Chairman, in his introductory remarks, pointed out that the main object of the Association was to help those who had left asylums recovered from an attack of insanity to make a fresh start in life; and this was the more necessary as mental illnesses were often matters of months, not days or weeks, and consequently situations could not be kept open for the sufferers, as they were some-