

and that he would not be acting dishonourably, under the circumstances, in giving up the engagement (hear, hear).

Owing to the lateness of the hour Dr. SAVAGE replied very briefly, saying that the paper was meant simply to be a suggestive one. Nearly all the speakers had quoted facts, and if the facts could only be put together much good would accrue. He, therefore, hoped that the members would accept his paper as merely a suggestive one, and fill up the details for themselves.

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*Correspondence of the Parliamentary and Pensions Committee of the Medico-Psychological Association with the First Lord of the Treasury, the Commissioners in Lunacy, and the President of the Local Government Board, in December, 1882, and January, 1883.*

[The Sub-Committee appointed at the Meeting of the Parliamentary and Pensions Committee of the Medico-Psychological Association, held in London on the 29th November, 1882, submit, for the information of the Members, the following Correspondence.]

1.—*Letter Addressed by the Chairman of the Parliamentary and Pensions Committee of the Medico-Psychological Association to the First Lord of the Treasury.*

TO THE RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P., FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, &c., &c., &c.

SIR,

The Parliamentary Committee of the Medico-Psychological Association desire with reference to the County Government Bill, one of the measures said to be in preparation for the coming Session, respectfully to direct your attention to the financial relations existing since the Parliamentary grant of 1874 between the Government and the County and Borough Pauper Lunatic Asylums.

Last year this grant from the Treasury for England and Wales alone towards the maintenance of the lunatics in these asylums amounted to £418,632. A great opportunity appears to us to occur in the establishment of County Financial Boards for placing the expenditure of this grant on a surer and more satisfactory footing. At present, as you are aware, the Treasury pay 4s. a week to the several Unions for every pauper lunatic maintained in asylums.

There is a general concurrence of opinion with the Committee of Visitors and their Medical Officers (as shewn in their several annual reports to the Quarter Sessions) that the present distribution of this grant leads directly to a needless increase in the admissions to the asylums of aged lunatics, harmless imbeciles, chronic cases, and idiot children, who formerly were and can, with great economy and equal benefit, be kept under proper arrangements in the workhouse wards.

In their last Report for 1882, the English Commissioners in Lunacy, in the following remarks confirm the opinion we entertain of

the injury thus done by the present application of the 4s. grant :—  
“ In our experience there is now frequently a tendency to send to the asylum patients who might be sufficiently cared for in workhouses. We have no doubt, indeed, that the effect of the Parliamentary subvention of 4s. a week allowed to Boards of Guardians for every insane patient maintained in an asylum has, in many instances, tended to promote the removal to asylums, and has prevented the return back to workhouses from asylums, of patients who could, with slightly more liberal provision in the way of food and supervision, be adequately dealt with in workhouses. The rate of maintenance in county asylums is in many districts so moderate that, deducting the 4s. subvention, the cost to the Guardians is less than if the insane person were retained in the workhouse. One of the consequences has been an increased demand for county asylum accommodation, and an increased burdēn on the county rate, though there has been, by means of the subvention, some relief of local charges as regards the poor rate.”

The yearly increase in this Parliamentary grant of 4s. is startling. For the financial year 1875-6 it amounted to £337,126, in 1881-2 it rose to £418,632 for England and Wales only. To these figures have to be added the payments made in 1881-2 to Scotland and Ireland, viz., £79,711 for Scotland, and £87,250 for Ireland, being a total of £585,593. In the estimates for 1882-3 there is a further increase of £8,500 for England, £3,412 for Scotland, and £2,078 for Ireland on this 4s. grant. Here, then, is a yearly increasing expenditure of over half a million voted by Parliament under the idea that thereby relief is given to the landed interest at the cost of the Imperial Treasury; yet the only result is to increase alike the total expenditure on the maintenance of pauper lunatics in asylums, and by increasing their number to compel the counties to incur fresh expenditure in the enlargement and increase of the county asylums, all of which expenditure tends directly to increase the county rate.

The total cost of maintenance in the county asylums paid by the unions in 1875 was £859,073. In 1881, this sum increased to £1,033,780. During the same period the yearly admissions into the county asylums increased from 8,792 to 10,758, and the ratio of the pauper lunatics in asylums to 10,000 of the population, rose from 13·22 to 16·40, while the total proportion of pauper lunatics to the population stood at 23·07 and 25·40 in these six years. Thus, while the total increase of pauper lunacy to the population was only 2·33 per 10,000, the increase in the same period of pauper lunatics maintained in asylums was 3·18.

In the report of the Scottish Commissioners in Lunacy for 1881 the influence of this grant on the total number of pauper lunatics in asylums has been very carefully analysed in a statistical study of great merit. We can here only indicate their conclusions, viz., that the grant has increased the number of pauper lunatics in asylums and raised the cost both of maintaining them and providing accommoda-

tion for them ; a result identical with that at which, as we have said, the visitors and medical officers of the county asylums in England have arrived.

We might greatly extend these remarks, but we think we have said enough to forcibly direct your attention to the importance of re-adjusting this grant, so that instead of leading as now to wasteful expenditure and adding, by the required increase in asylums, to the county rate, it may be made, as was intended by its author, the means of relieving the local expenditure on the accommodation and maintenance of pauper lunatics.

The suggestion we offer for your consideration is that this grant be paid, not to the several unions, but to the new County Financial Boards for the payment of certain definite items in the cost of the provision and maintenance of pauper lunatics in the county asylums. We propose that the salaries and wages should be the first charge on this fund, and which, being part of the maintenance cost, would be a direct relief to the unions of about 2s. 3d. a week per patient. The next charge on this grant should be the pensions which now fall on the county rate, and may be put at 9d. The remainder, 1s., should be applied to the repairs and enlargement of the fabric, also a county rate charge. This rate does not average more than the 1s. to be thus applied. On this scheme the Unions would benefit to the amount of the salaries and wages, and the average maintenance charge in the county asylums would be reduced from 9s. 6d. to 7s. 3d. (See appendix B.) The temptation to remove incurable lunatics from the workhouse wards to the asylums would be removed owing to the continued higher rate of maintenance in the county asylums, while yet a marked reduction of the weekly charge would be made to the Unions. The county rate, again, which really represents the landed interest which this grant was intended chiefly to relieve, would gain the amount now charged against it for pensions and repairs of the fabric ; and, what would still be a greater saving, the yearly cost of increasing the asylums and providing others to meet the present influx of chronic lunatics from the workhouses would cease.

Should this principle of the application of the 4s. grant to these items of expenditure be accepted by you, the opportunity is then given of placing the superannuation allowances granted by statute to the officers and servants of the county and borough asylums on a more stable and satisfactory footing than they are at present. We have suggested that these be made the second charge on the 4s. grant, and said that 9d. would amply meet all demands in the county rate for this item.

The LVII. section of "The Lunatic Asylums Act, 1853," and section XII. of "The Lunacy Acts Amendment Act, 1862," provide that the Committee of Visitors may, if in their discretion they think fit to do so, recommend to the Quarter Sessions for a retiring pension not exceeding two-thirds of the salary and allowances payable at the time of retirement, any officer or servant of fifteen years'

service, and not less than fifty years of age. In practice, this clause has led to very variable results. Some Quarter Sessions, as the Surrey this year, have granted the full allowance after fifteen years' service and fifty years of age. In others the question has been differently viewed, and great uncertainty prevails in the minds of the officers of these asylums as to their prospective pensions. We venture to suggest that this is the occasion to revise the conditions of asylum pensions. It may on the one hand be admitted that under the present statutes the service required is too short, fifteen years, and the age at which pensions may be granted too low, fifty—both of which conditions, doubtless, have been the cause of the difficulties and differences in the application of the pension clauses which have hitherto prevailed at Quarter Sessions. On the other hand, the officers of these asylums feel very deeply the uncertainty of permissive pensions granted only at the pleasure of the Quarter Sessions, and they feel that the same or even greater uncertainty will attend the future of their pensions should they be left at the control of the County Financial Boards.

In their perplexity they turn to the provisions made by Parliament for the superannuation of the civil servants under "The Superannuation Act, 1859," and they desire respectfully to urge on your consideration the justice and expediency of placing the officers and servants of the county and borough asylums on an equality with the other civil servants of the State. They are ready to waive the claims they now have to a pension of two-thirds of their salaries and allowances after fifteen years' service and fifty years of age, and to accept the requirements of that statute as set out in sections II. and IV.

The Bill introduced by your Government last Session, "The Police Act, 1882," had for its object to assure the right of constables to pensions after a fixed period of service. The officers of county and borough asylums ask a similar gift at your hands, and desire to be placed like other civil servants under "The Superannuation Act, 1859," with the allowances and safeguards contained in its provisions. If our suggested re-adjustment of the 4s. grant meets with your approval, the 9d. appropriated to the relief of the county rate, for the payment of these pensions, appears to us to justify their being placed under the Treasury regulations, as provided in "The Superannuation Act, 1859," the provisions of which we regard in the assurance of an equitable superannuation allowance as just and fair alike to the State and to its civil servants, and which, for the officers and servants of the county and borough lunatic asylums, we should thankfully accept at your hands.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

(Signed) C. LOCKHART ROBERTSON, M.D.

Chairman of the Parliamentary and Pensions

Committee of the Medico-Psychological Association.

London, December 20, 1882.