

*The Austrian Curatel Procedure.*

In Austria the Curatel law has long applied, not only to the insane, but also to habitual drunkards and others deficient in self-control. This law provides for the appointment of a Curator, under whose control the patient is put when discharged from an asylum, etc. The Curatee can apply from time to time to the Court for the annulling of the Curatel, and the decision rests on the evidence of State physicians and other testimony. In some instances repeated applications have been made before the discharge from Curatorship has been granted.

One result is, as pointed out by Professor Schlangenhäusen,\* that in Lower Austria there is great over-crowding in the asylums from the admission of forty per cent. of habitual drunkards. These, as elsewhere, are found to exert a deleterious effect on the ordinary insane, and the Austrian Government therefore proposes to construct for drunkards special asylums to be under State control.

The appointment of Curators in certain cases of insanity, as well as in states of loss of self-control, would certainly constitute a valuable supplement, not only to the treatment of these conditions, but also in safeguarding the community from those who are dangerous.

A provision of this kind might certainly be made with advantage in the forthcoming legislation by Parliament in regard to habitual drunkards, as it probably will be in the similar legislation for compulsory curative procedure which is under the consideration of the Reichsrath. Such an addition to legal control might be made without the sweeping re-modelling of our lunacy system which some of our lunacy reformers would advocate.

---

*Attempted Attendants' Trades Union.*

The attempt to form a trades union of attendants in Ireland has been quashed with the firmness and promptitude that the occasion demanded. A trades union is as impossible in an asylum as in the army or navy. Discipline would be impossible, and no confidence could be placed on a staff which would at any moment be paralysed by the action of an irre-

\* *Wiener Medicinische Press*, Fl. 9, 1896.

sponsible, and often tyrannously autocratic trades union committee. The Report of the last meeting of the Irish Division in "Notes and News" forms a permanent record (if any were needed) of the right method of dealing with such attempts at insubordination.

---

*Pensions and Gratuities.*

The present time would seem to be most opportune to press the claims of those engaged in the treatment of the insane for assured pensions and for gratuities under special or exceptional circumstances.

The discussion of the pension question some years back revealed very opposing views among Asylum Medical Superintendents. The last few years, however, have brought a considerable amount of experience on this question, and it would be desirable again to discuss it, since there is a possibility that greater unanimity may now be found to prevail.

The gratuities question is one on which there has been an unanimous expression of opinion, and there is probably a good opportunity of making the granting of these legal in the Lunacy Amendment Bill of the present Session if the members of this Association individually and collectively bring their influence into play in the proper quarters.

The grievous injury of a gardener attendant at the West Green Asylum recently reported is at once an illustration of the dangers of the occupation and of the necessity for power to grant gratuities or allowances to the widows and children of those who lose their lives in the performance of their duty.

---

*Increase of Lunacy.*

The increase of lunacy has again been made the subject of question in the House of Commons by a Member who has interested himself on the point, and has expressed very strong opinions thereon. He proposes an International Commission on the subject. Such a Commission might collect interesting and valuable information, but we doubt if it would bring us any nearer a definite conclusion from existing statistics than has been reached by the Commissioners for the three divisions of the country in their more recent reports.