

OFFICIAL REPORT OF THE SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL OFFICERS OF ASYLUMS AND HOSPITALS FOR THE INSANE.

A special meeting of the association was held on Monday, February 28th, at the Great Western Hotel, Paddington, for the purpose of taking into consideration the provisions of Mr. Walpole's Lunacy Bills.

Dr. CONOLLY, president of the association, occupied the chair.

The following Members of the Association were present: Dr. Forbes Winslow; Dr. Wynter; Dr. Tuke, Chiswick; Dr. Chevallier, Ipswich; Dr. Borrigan, Birmingham; Dr. Paul, Camberwell; Dr. Millar, Bethnal House; Dr. Bakewell, Church Stretton, Salop; Dr. Corsellis, Brighton, *pro tem*; Mr. Bush, Clapham; Dr. Seaton, Sunbury; Dr. Maxwell, Bentinck Street; Robert Gardiner Hill, Esq.; Dr. Nesbitt, Hospital for the Insane, Northampton; Dr. Fayrer, Henley-in-Arden; Dr. Arlidge; Dr. Blandford; John Bartlett, Esq., Sussex House, Hammersmith; Dr. Burnett, Alton; Dr. A. J. Sutherland, Physician to St. Luke's Hospital; Dr. Campbell, Physician to the Essex Lunatic Asylum; W. G. Marshall, Esq., Colney Hatch; Dr. Prichard, Abingdon Abbey, Northam; Dr. G. J. Stilwill, Moorcroft, Uxbridge; Dr. Davey, Northwoods, Bristol; Dr. Lockhart Robertson, Physician to the Sussex Lunatic Asylum; Dr. J. C. Bucknill, Physician to the Devon Connty Asylum; Dr. Henry Stevens, St. Luke's Hospital; Dr. Hood, Physician to Bethlehem Hospital.

Mr. Bolden, Honorary Secretary of the Alleged Lunatic's Friend Society, was also present.

The PRESIDENT, in opening the proceedings said:—I shall not trouble you with many observations of my own upon the subject of these bills, being quite sure that there are many intelligent gentlemen in this assembly who are more accustomed to reading Acts of Parliament than I am, and better able to form a judgment upon the clauses. I thought it desirable, however, as we have been for sometime expecting legislation with respect to the insane, that you should have the opportunity of meeting together to consider whether the things now proposed to the public are such as you generally approve of, or not. I fear the bill has not been in the hands of all the members of the association, it being so short a time since it was printed, but I will make a few

observations upon it, as there are several clauses in the bill which appear to be very good and unobjectionable, while there are others, which it has appeared to all with whom I have had the opportunity of conferring, as very objectionable indeed, and calculated to throw a degree of disgrace upon gentlemen who are devoted to this department of practice, and to discourage men of respectability from engaging or continuing to be engaged in it. The unfortunate part of the matter is that in all legislation of this kind, people appear to take up a subject which they do not understand, and they will not condescend to consult those who do understand it. They set out with this assumption, that all men who are engaged in the department of insanity, or in the taking care of lunatics—in this very high department, I call it, of medicine—are persons quite unworthy to be trusted, that they have no motive but that of having the care of patients, getting hold of them, keeping them as long as they can, and making the most of them, and have no desire for the advancement of science or anything that is honourable. They carefully avoid consulting those who could by a single observation, very often prevent a most foolish attempt at legislation. At the same time these bills are brought into parliament by a gentleman of such very high talent, a man so universally esteemed, I believe, by all parties, I mean Mr. Walpole, that one would be ashamed to say anything in the least degree disrespectful regarding him. But speaking of the bills, they bear to my mind a very strong evidence of having been drawn up without a knowledge of the subject, and without any reference to those who do possess that knowledge. Thus there are in the bill clauses which relate to the appointment of officers for the inspection of asylums, and they are called Medical Examiners. They are not to be selected from persons who have been acquainted with insanity particularly, but they are especially to be selected from those who are not familiar with insanity. To these examiners a great deal of power is given. They may visit your houses, even every day under certain circumstances, and that appears to be a very objectionable part of this bill. They are to decide, also, within seven days, if you receive a patient, as to whether you may keep that patient or not, and they may make a report that you must not keep the patient. Now, every gentleman in this room knows, as well as I can tell him, that when patients are admitted to an asylum, though they have been most troublesome at home, very often their manner becomes entirely changed, and for a week, or

for a longer period, there is very little to be made out of them, as they are perfectly quiet and tractable. They have been, perhaps, quite unmanageable at home, and would be so again if they were set at liberty. Then there are many cases of recurrent insanity in which patients seem perfectly well, and yet may break out in a dangerous malady a short time afterwards. Again, some persons are very well during the day, and raving during a great part of the night. We know, also, that generally speaking melancholy and suicidal patients talk in the most rational manner, and would throw any one off his guard, except a person familiar with them. Yet upon all these very important points the medical examiners, men of great respectability, no doubt, engaged in practice in the country, are called upon to disregard the medical certificates, to disregard your opinion who have taken the patient, because you are supposed to be an interested person, and absolutely to make a report which may cause that patient to be discharged. There is one clause in the bill, the 15th, I think, by which it is enacted, "that no Medical Examiner shall sign any certificate for the reception of a patient into any licensed house in his district, and no person, wholly or partly proprietor of any licensed house, shall sign any certificate for the reception of a patient into any licensed house whatever, and no person receiving, or who may have stipulated to receive, directly or indirectly from the proprietor or of any person having any pecuniary interest in a licensed house, any per centage, commission, or profit in respect of patients admitted therein, shall sign any certificate for the reception of a patient into such house." The latter part is not objectionable, but the objectionable portion of the clause is that which says, "that no person wholly or partly proprietor of any licensed house shall sign any certificate for the reception of a patient into any licensed house whatever"—which especially excludes those who are quite familiar with insanity, who are consulted about it, from filling up a certificate to remove a patient, however desirable it may be that that removal should take place immediately. It makes it perfectly necessary that the friends of all such patients should call in gentlemen who are not familiar with insanity, to do that which appears to me would be generally much better done by those who are seeing cases of insanity every day. There is another point which I think is also very objectionable. These Examiners may go into your house, examine your patients, and make special reports to the Commissioners, but they are not to make any entry in your

books, and they are not to communicate to you what their opinion is about your patients; a proceeding really to which one can give no better name than that of a perfect system of *espionage*. It is very improper and indecorous as applied to a set of gentlemen who rank well with their medical brethren, who have taken especial pains to understand the subject, and who have devoted themselves to a department of practice, in which it would be impossible for them, generally speaking, to make a decent income, unless they also took the charge of patients. But that they should on that account be considered as taking charge of them with merely mercenary views is, I think, perfectly disgraceful, and is not justified by the general character of the medical men engaged in this practice. With these observations I shall not trouble you further than to say, that it appears very desirable that against all these discouraging clauses, we should have the opportunity of communicating with Mr. Walpole, of pointing out to him, in a quiet manner, the objections that exist, and requesting his reconsideration of the clauses. I imagine that would meet generally the views of the meeting; but, of course, I shall be very happy to hear what the sentiments of gentlemen are, and as far as I can do so to forward and promote them.

Dr. LOCKHART ROBERTSON: I rise to refer for a moment to some proceedings which took place at the last meeting at Edinbro', where a committee was appointed to take charge of the legal proceedings which, at that time, it was supposed would come before the House. I should have asked that committee to have met before now, had it not been for the distance at which many of the members are living, and also from my having learned from Dr. Conolly that he proposed to have this general meeting. I think, now we are met here, it is very important that a committee should be appointed to watch the further proceedings before the House, and that this legal committee (of course taking the sentiments of the Edinbro' meeting into consideration) should take charge of those proceedings. But I think, as the measure is so very important, that in addition to that committee, the Committee of Management of the society should be associated with them; and, in order further to obtain the necessary legal advice for watching the proceedings before the committee, I have to propose that Mr. Edward Conolly be added as Honorary Counsel to that Special Committee. We have a precedent for this in the proceedings of the British Association, where Mr. Hastings gave his services to the committee

that watched the proceedings of the Medical Bill before the House, and he was found to be of very great assistance. Mr. Edward Conolly has very kindly stated, that he will place his services at our disposal, should we wish to avail ourselves of them. I think, therefore, if it meets with the approval of the meeting, that a committee, composed of the Committee of Management and of that appointed at Edinbro', would be one representing all shades of feeling in the association, and a body that would be competent (having received your authority) to deal further with the whole matter, and to carry out any resolutions which may be proposed; and also, probably, to seek an interview with Mr. Walpole, as the president has mentioned. I beg to propose that the names of the Committee of Management be added to the committee appointed at Edinburgh, in order for them to watch the legal proceedings of this session, and that Mr. Edward Conolly be appointed as honorary secretary to that committee.

Dr. CORSELLIS: Before the question is put, I should like to ask, if the committee formed at Edinburgh was constituted of gentlemen connected with this society, or was it exclusively confined to Edinburgh or Scotland?

Dr. ROBERTSON: They were principally English members, and confined, almost entirely, to the English Branch of the Association.

Dr. CORSELLIS: This matter seems very important. So great a reflection has been cast upon the character of medical men by the clauses of the bill, particularly the 13th, that I think it is very desirable to adopt the strongest and most active measures which can be taken, to counteract the bill, and I think it is desirable that a committee should be appointed for that purpose, I, therefore, second the proposition with great pleasure.

The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. STEVENS asked if Mr. Conolly's appointment would involve any cost to the Association.

Dr. ROBERTSON: None at all. Mr. Conolly has placed his services entirely at the disposal of the society. (Hear, hear.)

Dr. SUTHERLAND: I should have been very happy to second the motion that has just passed, having been requested to do so by Dr. Robertson. I myself, sir, share very much your opinion as to clause 13 of the proposed bill. Personally I should be glad to be relieved of the necessity of signing any certificate of a patient's insanity, but I do think that the clause makes an invidious distinction in excluding persons connected with private asylums, who are

best qualified to judge of insanity, and certainly can sign these certificates at present for their own patients, to transfer them from one asylum to another. I think it would be better if that clause had not been put in, and I think considerable inconvenience to the public may arise from it; because I apprehend that the patient may not be always placed under those circumstances which may be best for his recovery; and frequently, if patients are not immediately placed in asylums, great inconvenience may result. Holding these opinions, I saw Mr. Walpole to-day, and I told him I thought that those respectable persons who had the care and treatment of patients in private asylums, were rather suffering for the sins of those who had the care of Mrs. Turner. He said he did not think so at all; but that he had been recommended to put in this clause by the Commissioners. He then went on to say, that in consequence of resigning his place in the ministry, he should be able to take the chair in the select committee which is appointed by the House of Commons to consider these bills; and, being chairman, the course he should pursue would be this: first of all, he should consider the County Asylum Bill, and then hand that down to the House of Commons for its decision; next he should consider the Care and Treatment Bill, and that would lead to the consideration of the care and treatment of chancery lunatics. He said we must carefully distinguish the management of the property of chancery lunatics, from their care and treatment; in which I certainly agree with him. He also entered into other matters, to which, as being of a confidential character, I cannot refer.

Dr. BURNETT: I should like to say a few words upon the subject of the bill, if I am in order in doing so. The circumstance of this bill being brought before us at this time, corresponds very much with the character of almost all legislation in this country of a social character. We never hear of any alterations until something has occurred to force them suddenly upon the minds of the governing power. At this time we have two bills brought before us; but, strange to say, two of the greatest difficulties that must ever occur in the treatment of the insane in this country, are either very cleverly or else very gravely omitted. One of these difficulties is as to who shall be the governing power; and the other is, who shall be appointed under the governing power. Since the passing of the 5th and 6th Victoria, we have been governed by a commission, and that commission

has been appointed very much in the same way that most public bodies are appointed in this country. The greater number of those who constitute that body cannot know anything of insanity. Before this last pressure came upon us, there was some idea in the minds of the public that a little blood that was nearer to ourselves being instilled into it, would be a desirable thing; consequently two of the commissioners were selected from the County Asylums.

But that part of the bill which is of the most importance, and requiring the gravest and the tenderest treatment, is that which appears to me to have received the heaviest blow and the least attention. I allude to the management of the private establishments for the insane in this country. When Commissioners were appointed from the County Asylums, we naturally got a great deal of information conveyed to the commission, which was likely to be of service in the general treatment of the insane. Nobody can deny that fact; but I contend that if justice had been done, instead of electing two physicians or surgeons from the County Asylums, two ought to have been elected from the private asylums; because those who have the charge of the insane in private asylums, have placed upon them a very heavy weight of responsibility, such a responsibility as, perhaps, does not fall to the lot of any other section of our fellow subjects; for we not only have the medical charge of those who cannot speak for themselves, but we are in that apparently painful position, which implies that we really have the care of them in a money sense; the consequence is, that there is a vulgar impression abroad that the greater number of those who have the charge of the insane in this country are mercenary men, only bent upon doing that which may be most beneficial to themselves. I shall be able to show, before the committee of the House of Commons, that there is no body of men in this country who have so great a claim upon their fellow-countrymen as the proprietors of lunatic asylums. The charge brought against them, connected with many transactions, would fall to the ground, as applied to the officers of the county asylums; that responsibility is entirely taken off their shoulders; but when anything occurs which involves the conduct of an individual, what is the course which is usually pursued by the public? Why, they look at the culpable conduct of an individual, and brand the entire system of the treatment of the insane with their condemnation, under the impression that all are influenced by the same motives. As well might I say that the whole race of

generals or admirals, or any other men who belong to the different professions in society, are made up of the same material; the argument would be just as good.

But, sir, I think that if we do not insist more strongly upon the necessity of their altering, entirely, the constitution of the commission, or else have a very considerable infusion of different blood, we shall certainly have very considerable evils to contend with; and such a principle will lead, I am confident, to the disappointment of many gentlemen who, at present, have the charge of the insane. I do not think it is possible that any gentleman, who has had a liberal education, can hold the situation I do, if this bill passes in the state in which it now is. I feel strongly upon this matter. I had much rather the Government would pass a bill immediately, and take the money question out of the hands of private proprietors. Let them take evidence on the subject; let them see what is the truth, and they will find men who have been faithful to their trust for 20 years; men who have never gone down to the sea-side for recreation; who have never been able to spend their money away from their heavy charge; who have been closely confined and surrounded by the atmosphere of the insane; many of them have spent their money and their substance freely, for the good of others; and many of them are poor, having been impoverished by the system which has been adopted towards them. Now, I think if we have any alteration at all, the alteration ought to consist in a very considerable augmentation of the commission; we certainly ought to have more commissioners instead of those medical examiners, who, without paying any ill compliment to them, must be men totally incompetent to discharge the duties of their office. In cases where the patients are examined, that examination ought to be conducted by the commissioners themselves. If they have not time to do it, they ought to enlarge their powers. It is the highest duty that can belong to the commission, and therefore they ought not to delegate it to inferior persons. It is no use to say that they have not time. Sufficient time ought to be devoted to the study of these cases; if they are barristers, and not able to investigate them, it is much better that they should be confined to duties in town, while a sufficient number of surgeons and physicians, selected from that body of men, who have the best means of judging what mental disease really is, are appointed to travel through the country and satisfy the demands of the public with regard to the safety of the insane. I am sure I do not

say too much when I remark, that unless there are one or two commissioners appointed who have been intimately mixed up with private asylums, there is no other set of men who can inform the commission upon these points, or carry on instruction of that kind satisfactorily to the public. The public will always have the feeling, that they are looking upon men who are not level with them in point of integrity, and in point of rank. I do hope, if we pass any resolution, that we shall recognize these two principles—that of augmenting the commission, and, if that augmentation does take place, appointing a sufficient number of surgeons and physicians who are connected with our private asylums in the country. It is not at all necessary in so doing that the old system should be adopted; you may appoint a board to manage a private lunatic asylum, as well as a public one; a board might conduct it just as well as an individual; and I, for one, should be most pleased to come under such an arrangement, if the commission would only ensure me a return for the outlay I have made. If they would put me in the same position I was in 20 years ago. I would gladly give up my position, in regard to the treatment of the insane, if they would give me a good salary as a gentleman.

The PRESIDENT: I am sure Dr. Burnett's observations have been listened to with great interest. It has been thought desirable to limit the proceedings to making objections to the bill, and representing them respectfully to the government, but not exactly to suggest the course to be pursued. That is the present feeling of the committee, but it is quite open to the meeting to take any course they may think proper, and to propose any resolutions on the subject.

Dr. BURNETT: If nothing substantive comes from us, I am afraid we shall get nothing (hear, hear). It strikes me we ought to make a very large claim, not expecting, however, to have all that we claim. That is the way I should recommend your acting. Certainly we ought to place a substantive resolution before the ministers. If the bill passes as it now stands, I am sure the public will be very considerably worsted, for they will not get a honourable man to fill the situation of proprietor of a private lunatic asylum.

Dr. FORBES WINSLOW: I think, sir, we have arrived at a very important crisis in the history of the specialty in which we are engaged. In former attempts to legislate upon this question, certain measures have been concocted by the Commissioners in Lunacy, or persons delegated by them: they have been framed, clause by clause, I presume, in the office

of the Commissioners in Lunacy, and as I am informed, no gentleman specially connected with the treatment of the insane, and presumed to have a practical knowledge of the operation of the law, has ever been consulted by the Commissioners of Lunacy, or the persons appointed by them, previously to preparing the bills and submitting them to the consideration of parliament. Consequently I believe many measures have gone down to the Houses of Parliament for their consideration, and passed, without any gentleman who has special information, and practical information upon the points, having been consulted. These bills have taken us all by surprise. Fortunately for us, this move in the legislation has opened our eyes, and we have met here in obedience to your summons, to consider, as we ought to consider, the measure which has been submitted to Parliament, and that we may have an opportunity of going thoroughly into the bill, clause by clause. A committee of the House of Commons is to sit to take evidence upon the question. I presume many persons in this room will be examined before that committee, and therefore we now have a valuable opportunity, which we never had before, of insisting upon the government doing the gentlemen who are engaged in this specialty of the treatment of the insane, common ordinary justice ; that is all we require. This bill which has been introduced by Mr. Walpole, and is to be referred to the committee of the House of Commons is, I presume, to be considered only as a skeleton kind of measure, subject to the consideration of the committee, and suggestions will probably emanate from the committee, based upon the evidence which they may think proper to take, with regard to the general question under the consideration of Parliament. Therefore, I think, now is our time, now is the proper opportunity for us not only to consider this bill itself, but to look at past legislation, and to point out to the government the great defects in former measures that have been passed upon this subject, and to insist on their doing us a simple act of justice, by modifying several clauses in former bills which act injuriously upon us as individuals, and by a process of reflex action, act injuriously upon the great interests of the insane. I think with Dr. Burnett, that we are not only bound to consider this bill, but to consider former bills, and after having duly considered them, to make suggestions to the government for the amendment of the law. With regard to the former bill, the first question which is for consideration is undoubtedly that which Dr. Burnett has referred to—the appointment of Commissioners in Lunacy. I think with him, that the present

constitution of the board is defective. I say nothing of the gentlemen who hold office in that commission ; I wish to say nothing personally disrespectful of them ; but I do think that in any future appointments which the government may think proper to make, due regard should be had to the competency of the gentlemen who are to be selected to act as Commissioners. Then that brings me to the question which I had the honour, I believe, in this room, of making at the meeting of the association some years ago, as to the singular restrictions which are placed upon a very large body of the profession, who are virtually, by the former Act of Parliament, disfranchised from the office of Commissioner (hear, hear). The office of Commissioner was thrown entirely into the hands of the public men. I have very great respect for the men connected with public asylums, but I think, in justice to men connected with private asylums, that we who share in the troubles and the anxieties, and the wear and tear of life necessarily connected with the treatment of the insane, should participate in the rewards and the prizes (of which there are very few) that are within the grasp of men connected with this specialty. Therefore I do think it most important and material that we should direct the attention of the government to the restrictions placed upon the appointment of Commissioners—the appointment of men who have an interest in private asylums for the treatment of the insane, who are virtually disfranchised by the clause in the former bill, inasmuch as no man is considered to be eligible for the office of Commissioner who had been for a period of two years connected with an asylum for the insane, or had any personal interest in the confinement of an insane patient. Now I think that is a most iniquitous, unjust, and unfair restriction put upon a large body of men (hear, hear) ; because it throws us completely into the shade. Not that yourself and many gentlemen in this room, if they were offered the office would accept it ; but still, there are many men advanced in life who would like to be placed in a comfortable judicial position like that, and who would be fully competent, perhaps more so than any other class of men, to perform its onerous duties. Therefore I do think that that restriction should be removed ; for it throws a slur and a stigma upon us. It is said out of doors, “Oh, you gentlemen are so contaminated, so degraded by your having any interest in the confinement of an insane patient, or having any interest in a private asylum, that the government do not at all think you fit for the judicial office of a Commissioner until you have severed yourself from the

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asylum at least two years, or severed yourself from the two or three patients that you may have a pecuniary interest in. But when you have been placed, as it were, in quarantine, and undergone a kind of purgation, then you may be considered by the government qualified to hold that office." I think we should not be doing justice to ourselves, if we were not forcibly to impress upon the government the importance of striking out that restriction from the former bill. Now, sir, there is a clause in the bill, proposing that certain medical examiners should be appointed, and that within twenty-four hours a notice should be given to those medical examiners; men having no practical knowledge of insanity, but happening to reside in certain districts, and fortunate enough to secure the appointment; notice is to be given to them of all patients admitted into private asylums. We have trouble enough now in making our returns, but the matter is made worse under the present bill. My own opinion is this, that every legitimate precaution should be taken to prevent persons being improperly sent to lunatic asylums under any condition of restraint, and, as far as I am individually concerned, I should have no objection to having four or five of these certificates of insanity if it were required by the law, previously to a patient being placed under restraint. Let two or three men certify to the insanity of the person, and then let these certificates be submitted to the supervision of a competent person, a person not interested, and let him decide whether the patient is in a fit condition to go into an asylum. If necessary let him go and examine the patient. Every precaution should be taken to prevent persons from being improperly sent to an asylum, or placed under restraint, but when once certified, when he is considered to be in a condition to be sent either to a private house or to an asylum, as a person labouring under disease of the body, affecting the mind, as a person labouring under some mysterious disorder of the brain and nervous system, affecting the manifestation of mind (for that is how, as pathologists, we must look at the question) as a person fit to be sent to an asylum, not to a prison, as all legislation supposes, but sent as you would send a patient with a broken leg or fractured skull to an hospital, to be cured through a course of medical and moral treatment; once having been considered a proper person to be so sent to an establishment to go through a course of curative treatment, it is the bounden duty of the legislature to throw all kinds of protection around that person, whilst being taken through that treatment. But if we are to have a number of men coming

to our asylums within 24 hours, to put our patients in the witness box to examine and cross-examine them, why every principle of treatment would be probably frustrated, and the very repose and quietude, the absence from all excitement, which are so essential for the successful treatment of a patient, and for which he has been sent to the asylum, would be rendered impracticable by some ignorant man, who happens to have some influence with the government. Such a proceeding is highly objectionable; it is an inquisitorial proceeding and irritating to the feelings. The examiner does not go to the medical man and say, "I have come to see a gentleman sent to your place, under your care; I wish to examine him as to his condition; let us compare notes, and see whether he is in a state to justify his being sent to an asylum." The object is not to ascertain the truth by comparing notes with the gentleman who has charge of the case, and who is the best fitted to give information as to the nature of the case; but the examiners virtually says to the medical man, "Hold your tongue; I can have no communication with you; I must examine the patient by myself; I must write to the Board of Commissioners; I must not tell you what I have to say; I have to send a secret missive to the Board of Commission." I say it is utterly un-English, and Dr. Burnett properly says that no gentlemen with any decent feeling could, for a single moment, submit to it without a protest. I believe the great defect is in not sufficiently protecting the patients before they are admitted. Let there be ample guarantee that the patient is in a condition to be admitted; then, I say, protect him in every possible way whilst he is being carried through a course of treatment. Then there is another point which I think very important, and which we should insist upon in any future legislation; I mean that the proprietor of the asylum should himself be protected; not only that the patient should be protected, but that some kind of protection should be thrown over those who have the responsible care of the lunatic. At present they are unprotected. I consider that a matter of great importance, that ought not to be lost sight of by the association. Whatever may be our position with regard to the commissioners, we should have at hand some kind of Court of Appeal, that we might appeal from the commissioners themselves in case any question should arise as to the conduct of our asylums, and the treatment of those unhappy persons who are placed under their care. I take this opportunity of repeating what I had the honour of suggesting at Edinburgh, that I do think we should first of all take into

consideration the important interests of the insane, putting aside, to a certain extent, the interests of the proprietors. The great thing is, what is best for the poor unhappy persons who are obliged to be placed in asylums. That is the important point. I do maintain, from my long experience in this matter, that it would conduce greatly to the advantage of a large body of persons who are suffering from insanity in this country, if they could be admitted into asylums without any certificate at all; if men, who felt that they required to be under restraint, that their brains were over-taxed, and that their minds were giving way, could be admitted on their own application. I have no doubt that there are men who, before their power of self-control is entirely destroyed, feel conscious that they are not in their right mind, and ought to be put under certain restraint. Men feeling disposed to commit suicide or homicide, will come to you voluntarily and say, "I shall destroy myself," or, "I shall destroy my wife unless I am placed under restraint." I know a case of a gentleman, who was subject to these homicidal fits of insanity, and who, when they came on, insisted on his hands being tied; and his hands were tied for so many hours until the paroxysm subsided. There are a vast number of these cases where the patients would be anxious to avail themselves of a well-conducted asylum, presided over by a benevolent and skilful man, if they were not compelled to be certified as lunatics. I do not think the matter should be lost sight of. There should be the greatest facility given for the admission of that class of patients into asylums—persons who are conscious that they ought to be under restraint, and who may be benefited by being taken through a course of curative treatment, and would, perhaps, recover in three or four weeks, but who ought not to be formally certified to be lunatics, and recorded as such in the books of the Commissioners of Lunacy. The question is now open for our consideration, and it will be our fault if we lose sight of the general principles of legislation upon the subject. We never had such an opportunity as is presented to us now. It is for us now, who have practical acquaintance with the subject, who are brought into daily contact with the insane, who have lived for years in the midst of them, it is for us to suggest to members of parliament, utterly ignorant of the subject in all its important practical bearings, it is for us to suggest to the government, who are oblivious of all practical knowledge of the subject, upon what general principles all legislation, with regard to lunacy, should be based. This is a valuable time for us, and I am delighted

that you, sir, have called us together, and that we can now have an opportunity of expressing publicly our opinions as to the principles upon which all legislation, with regard to lunacy, should proceed. There is another point which should not be lost sight of. I have no doubt difficulties would be thrown in the way of admitting, under circumstances of great precaution, into licensed asylums, men, who feel that they ought to be under restraint, and who do not like to be certified as lunatics; and I think it is the duty of government to consider whether there should not be some intermediate establishments. Let them be under the protection or the supervision of the Commissioners in Lunacy, or other parties delegated with legal authority to supervise and control all persons alleged to be of insane mind. But the question is, whether there should not be intermediate establishments for the reception of patients of that description. I have seen, and every person in this room has seen, patients who have recovered in four or five weeks, perfectly restored to reason, whom it would have been the height of cruelty to allow to be certified as lunatics, and registered as such at the lunacy office. I repeat, that we have to consider not only this bill but former bills, and it is our duty to impress upon government the grave defects in the constitution of former bills, and endeavour, as far as we possibly can, to get them remedied. As far as I am concerned, individually, I think it would have been much better for the commissioners and the government to look at the matter fairly in the face, and then they would see that the present Board of Commissioners are not numerically competent to the performance of their duties. (Hear, hear.) We must increase the number of the commissioners, and I say it will be much better to add four or five men to the board, competent practical men, men in whom we could place confidence, and thus guarantee an effectual supervision of the insane, rather than to appoint an inferior grade of men. The proposed proceeding is un-English and inquisitorial, and, so far as I am concerned, I should vote for increasing the number of the commissioners, rather than support or sanction any clause like that relating to the appointment of examiners; for I feel perfectly satisfied that no men appointed under such a clause will be fit for the performance of their duty. They will be brought into the most disagreeable antagonism with the proprietors of asylums, so that there will be constant heart-burnings. Our position, God knows, at present is painful and humiliating enough, without having any additional burdens thrown on our shoulders. (Hear, hear.)

Dr. BUCKNILL: I agree with much that has been said on the proposed appointment of medical examiners, but not on the ground that the appointment of such officers would be offensive and injurious to the proprietors of asylums, because I think it is possible that after a while their work might be conducted in a very routine manner. I object to it, because I think that the prescribed duties of the examiners would prove inefficient and useless. I do not believe that in the country districts there are medical men not interested in the care and treatment of the insane, whose opinions in such a position would be worth having; and I am very certain, that to expose patients to an examination immediately after their admission into an asylum, would be most injurious to their welfare. I believe the medical examiners themselves would find very shortly, that they could not depend upon the result of their own examinations (hear, hear). They would discover the fact, that a large proportion of the insane who are conspicuously insane before their admission into an asylum, become so tranquil very soon after their admission, and remain so perhaps for some time, that it would be most difficult, if not impossible, by an examination at that period, to arrive at a decided opinion that the confinement of such patients in an asylum had been a proper and necessary step. I repeat, the examiner would soon find his unassisted examination inefficient, and those to whom he would have to communicate the result of his examinations would also discover that his opinions were undecided and of little value. Therefore, on the score of utility, and for the purpose of protecting the patients themselves from an injurious source of irritation, I think the appointment of these examiners ought not to receive the sanction of the legislature. I agree with Dr. Winslow in the opinion, that the thing most required to be done, is to increase the power of the inspection possessed by the Commissioners, and I think it could be increased very readily by their visits being made singly, and not doubly, as at present. It seems to me that all the useful purposes of a visit from the Commissioners could be obtained from the visit of one instead of two. It might be needful and right that one visit should be made during the year by two Commissioners, conjointly as at present; yet all the other visits might well be made by a single Commissioner. The Commissioners at present have a very onerous and disagreeable amount of work thrown upon their shoulders, in the inspection of lunatics confined in workhouses. I think this duty ought to be taken from them, and placed upon the magistrates and upon officers

appointed by them for that purpose. I think the entire responsibility of the care and treatment of pauper lunatics, whether in or out of asylums, ought to devolve upon the magistrates of counties and the visitors of the asylums. The Commissioners of Lunacy ought to be relieved from that very onerous duty, and that would leave them very much more at liberty to make those inspections of private asylums which come more especially within their province.

Dr. DAVY: The resolution which I hold in my hand refers especially to the subject matter of the remarks of the three gentlemen who have preceded me. It alludes to the inspection of the medical examiners, and also to the private report to be made of their visits, and it refers to the very objectionable arrangement by which those gentlemen who practice in this specialty are not allowed to give certificates of insanity. I agree with the gentlemen who have gone before me, that the present is an opportunity which we ought not to lose. We should now express our unanimous opinion on certain points which have been brought under our consideration. The government has challenged us, and placed us in a most awkward position. We are looked upon with distrust. It is for us to show that we are deserving of confidence, and that we, as well as the members of the government, have in view the well-being of our patients. I do not myself understand why objection should be taken to the proprietors of licensed houses. It may be said that I am the proprietor of one. That is true; but I know many gentlemen who are proprietors of private asylums like myself, and really I find nothing in their moral character which should expose them to suspicion and mistrust, and should induce the government to bring into operation stringent rules, whereby their feelings must be hurt, and their position injured in the eyes of the world. I think this is an opportunity which we must none of us lose, and I hope the gentlemen present will feel earnestly that we are put on the defensive, and that the best should be made of the present time. With regard to the medical examiners, I perfectly agree with the remarks that have been made by Dr. Winslow and others. I believe that the appointment of medical examiners would result in extreme disappointment. What an absurdity to suppose that Dr. A. or Mr. B. or whosoever you please, is to have an entrance into Northwoods or any other establishment you like, and, as a superior, pronounce an opinion which is to negative your own; a man who has never had any practical knowledge of the disease, a man who is appointed, not because he has any peculiar capacity to fill the

office, but because he has friends at court! Surely this appointment of medical examiners must fall to the ground. The act would be a downright piece of absurdity, it must result in disappointment to all. Then there is the fact of those gentlemen being required to send in private reports conveying the result of their visits. Why, certainly, the matter is in itself ridiculous. We are to be put by. We who have private asylums are to be put upon the shelf. Our opinion is to go for nothing, and this medical examiner is to take precedence of us in every particular. Gentlemen, I think this is a personal insult. For my own part, supposing the law to come into operation, I shall never receive the visit of that medical examiner at Northwoods, without feeling that he personally insults me, or something akin to it; or if he does not, that the gentlemen who appoint him do. The proceeding is altogether un-English, and it never can continue so long as English hearts beat within our bosoms. Then there is another very serious matter. We who are engaged especially in the care and treatment of mental disorders are to be precluded from giving certificates of insanity. Now, what would be the result of this, if it were to become law? The medical certificates must be obtained from whom? From persons who have a very partial knowledge of mental disease. And what would be the result of that? Why, that a very large number of persons who ought to be placed in asylums, and who, from the peculiarity of their cases, require especial attention, kind care, and good treatment, will be excluded from such beneficial care, and allowed to be abroad in the world; the consequence of which may be very terrible to society. Let me recall to your minds the very terrible consequences of the fact, that numbers of insane persons in this large metropolis, and in most other large towns, Bristol, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Dublin, and other places, are going about every now and then, committing serious crimes, ruining the prospects of their families, bringing themselves into disgrace and committing dreadful acts of personal violence, even murder itself upon our fellow subjects. If you will only take the trouble to look at the newspapers within the last three or four years—take, for instance, a file of the *Times*, and go through its pages carefully, you will be astonished at the number of terrible crimes committed by insane persons who have had liberty when they ought to have been confined. Now, the legislature never contemplates the necessity of protecting the public. All they think it necessary to do is to take care that we who are engaged in this specialty, have

every difficulty in receiving patients, and that every facility is given for demanding the discharge of these persons. With regard to the requirements in reference to the discharge of patients, Mr. Walpole in his speech stated, that if a person had recovered, and shown himself to be in possession of sanity for a period of seven days, he should be forthwith discharged. Now that is a most terrible mistake. Just fancy a patient who had recovered only seven days from an attack of acute mania: is there any gentleman who would undertake to say that patient was well? I believe no one would undertake that responsibility. Certainly I would not myself. Then we know very well there are cases of a recurrent character—recurrent mania, or recurrent melancholia, that will appear to recover for two or three weeks; and according to Mr. Walpole such patients should be forthwith discharged, but what would be the result? Why, unheard of misery and terrible disgrace to individuals and families. [It was stated that what Mr. Walpole meant was, that no patient should be retained more than seven days after his recovery had been ascertained.] We must not be too fastidious in these matters. We must take care that we make every point tell, as Dr. Winslow said. The opportunity will not be repeated, and we must make the most of the present. There can be no doubt in the world, that instead of the appointment of these medical examiners, the only legitimate proceeding will be to appoint an increased number of Commissioners in Lunacy—such gentlemen as shall be really competent to discharge the duties of their office. That subject has been dwelt upon, and I need not further allude to it. One remark more, and I will conclude. There is an additional difficulty concerning gentlemen like myself who are proprietors of licensed houses in the provinces. We have to contend, not only against the difficulties with which Commissioners in Lunacy may under certain circumstances surround us, but also against the peculiarities of the visitors. Now whatever the conduct of the legislature may be, it is, I conceive, highly important that the law should be carried out to the letter, and that visitors should not have it in their power to alter the law. The visitors in the provinces positively alter the law to meet their own peculiar views. They resolve this, that, and the other—for what purpose? Why that their own self-esteem may be ministered to. I say, whatever the act of the legislature may be, care should be taken that the visitors should have no power whatever to alter the law of the land. Having made these remarks, I will conclude by moving the following resolution—

“That this meeting deprecates most strongly the provisions under
 “the new Lunacy Bills for the Appointment of Medical
 “Examiners, and for the system of Secret Reports to the
 “Commissioners, to be carried on by these Examiners; and
 “that it also deprecates the clause whereby medical men,
 “having an interest in private asylums, are rendered incom-
 “petent to sign certificates of lunacy.”

Dr. TUKE: I rise with pleasure to second the resolution, because I am fully convinced, by my own experience in the treatment of insanity, that this arrangement, if carried out, will render the entrance into our special branch of the profession of highly educated and honourable men, almost impossible. Those that are in it must, I suppose, perforce stay there; but I do think that the legislature will not pass the bill as it now stands, if they fully understand that it will be so highly unpalatable, so extremely disagreeable to men who, with fair honour, have carried on for years a very difficult and very onerous branch of the medical profession. In seconding Dr. Davy's resolution, I wish to object to one part of his speech in which he spoke of Mr. Walpole's observations, that a patient should not be allowed to remain a week, or even a day, after recovery. I fully agree with what Mr. Walpole said, and I trust no person in this room will be found to differ from him. I think Dr. Davy misunderstood the bearing of Mr. Walpole's remarks. Passing that over, I would draw the attention of the association to that part of the bill which speaks of the appointment of medical examiners. There has been, during the past year, a feeling in the public mind of a very serious nature, occasioned by recent proceedings—commitments in lunacy and abortive attempts at confining one or two patients—a feeling that it is possible to put a perfectly sane person into a lunatic asylum, or lock him up in a villa, or a cottage, and forcibly detain him there. I thought the bill would have quieted the public mind at once on that subject. I believe, at the present time, that such a thing is impossible. I believe it would be at once found out, and visited with severe and proper punishment. But if it be possible, I must say, that this bill is the very last one in the world to prevent it. It states, that the instant a medical examiner is apprised that a patient has entered a lunatic asylum, he is to go and examine him. Now, either the patient must be absolutely insane, in which case the visit of the examiner is perfectly useless, and, may be, mischievous; or he is not insane, that is to say, a vile conspiracy has been concocted by two or three medical men, in which the family of the patient, and

the proprietor of the asylum, have aided and abetted. In such a case, does the legislature give power to the examiners to dismiss the patient? No, but it absolutely legalises the transaction and recognizes the possibility of keeping a man for seven days in confinement, although he is in a sane condition. The thing is perfectly absurd. The man ought not to be there seven minutes if he is sane; but he should be at once released. The absurdity of that is really so great, that I trust it will be expunged from the bill. I confess, I think the true remedy will lie, not in examination of the patient when received into the house, but in a very careful previous examination before the admission. If an examiner is appointed at all, let him examine the patient before he is received into the house; but when the patient is once in the house let the responsibility of his detention rest upon the gentleman, whose reputation and honour are, in most cases, sufficient to bear such responsibility: I mean the proprietor of the asylum himself. It would almost appear as if the legislature, or whoever drew up these bills, were particularly anxious that sane persons should be sent to asylums; for, in one of the clauses, they make an arrangement, that no medical practitioner, engaged in the treatment of lunacy, or connected with private asylums (and I scarcely know an instance in which a medical man of eminence in our specialty is not connected with a lunatic asylum) shall be allowed to sign certificates. The result will be, that we shall have young practitioners who never saw an insane person, sending people with phrenitis or delirium tremens to a lunatic asylum. We shall have men who are suffering from an excitable temper, or who stutter, or get drunk, set down as dangerous lunatics. At all events, if we have not, it will not be the fault of the legislature, for they propose to take away from the only men who are competent to sign properly worded certificates the power of doing so. I fully agree with Dr. Burnett, that the appointment of such gentlemen as the proposed medical examiners, would render the position of an asylum proprietor one utterly untenable by gentlemen.

Dr. CHEVALLIER: The great objection I have to the resolution is, that it seems to limit the action of this large influential meeting, merely to protesting against certain clauses in the bill introduced by Mr. Walpole. I was in great hopes that the feeling of the meeting would be in favour of taking a more active part. I think that strong representations, coming from such an influential body of gentlemen as those now assembled, might have great weight with the House of Com-

mons ; and I was in hopes that the committee would be instructed to introduce other clauses, instead of contenting themselves with expunging those which are manifestly objectionable. Most of the points have been attended to by preceding speakers. I think it would be a very fine opportunity of increasing the number of the commission, and doing away with the difficulties which now exist, by which all gentlemen engaged in the treatment of lunatics, or who are at any rate interested in private asylums, are actually debarred from ever being commissioners unless they whitewash themselves for a period of two years. The House of Commons representing, as it does, the intellectual part of the nation at large, I think it would be a very easy matter to persuade them that some of these clauses are most absurdly objectionable. These points have been dwelt upon so fully, that I will mention only one or two more that seem to have escaped attention. There is one with regard to the copies of medical certificates and orders to be sent within 24 hours. I think, independently of the opprobrium that is thrown upon all proprietors of private houses, there is almost the impossibility of complying with the Act of Parliament in this respect. Supposing the patient is brought to my house late on Saturday night, I do not keep a clerk as these gentlemen do, who have the control of large public asylums, and I must do all the work myself, so that the greater part of Sunday might be taken up in copying out certificates respecting one or two patients, to be sent off by Sunday night's post to the commission.

Dr. BUCKNILL : Sunday, I imagine, does not count ; it is a *dies non* in law.

Dr. CHEVALLIER : I am afraid it would count in this case. I do not see any limitation in the bill. Reference has been made to the inefficiency of the medical examiners, and to the fact that after a time it would be found out that they were inefficient, and their work would be a matter of routine. I think, however, that they would do an incalculable amount of mischief, before they found out that they were inefficient. I think they would cause a great deal of opprobrium and injury, not only to the individual proprietors of private asylums, but also to the individuals confined in them. After they had done a great deal of mischief, and made a number of mistakes, I think they would very likely find out that they were really inefficient, and would content themselves with a routine performance of their duties, taking the opinions of the proprietors of the licensed houses instead of their own. In the metropolis and other large towns, the medical examiners

might, perhaps, be a very superior race of men ; but, if they are to be appointed by borough magistrates, who have an interest, or who think they have an interest in doing everything very cheaply, we should have the dregs of the medical profession coming and prying into our asylums : and their visits might be attended with injury to the proprietors, to the patients, and the patients' friends. I hope this opportunity will not be lost, but that we shall give instructions to the committee to take some further steps than merely protesting against some of the clauses.

The PRESIDENT : I take the liberty of interrupting the discussion merely to say that, as it appears to be a very general wish on the part of the members that we should not limit ourselves to merely protesting against the clauses, but that we should also suggest something, it would, perhaps, be interesting to you, as it certainly would to myself, to hear what the Society of the Friends of Alleged Lunatics desire in this matter ; and, having heard that, we might perhaps be guided in some degree by it, as to what would be the best course for us to pursue. In mentioning this Society of the Friends of Alleged Lunatics, I know there does exist on the part of some gentlemen, a kind of prejudice against them. Things have happened occasionally, which have been offensive perhaps to particular individuals, without any intention. But I think we are all bound to take specially into consideration that, if gentlemen, whom we allege to be lunatics, consider that they have been ill-treated, whether they have been so or not, it is no use to attempt to put an extinguisher upon their complaints, and it would be unworthy of us to treat them with contempt ; we ought to listen to what they have to say (considering that they have no means open to them except by appealing to the public) and to receive charitably every thing they may do, and to explain where we cannot amend. Mr. Bolden, their secretary, is present, and, although not wishing to obtuse his opinions upon the meeting, if it is agreeable he will explain to us, very kindly I think, what their intentions are, that we may be prepared to agree with what they are about to do, or propose, perhaps, what we think better. If there is no opposition, I shall call upon Mr. Bolden to be kind enough to address the meeting.

Dr. BURNETT : I hope we shall not separate without coming to some substantive resolution. I shall be pleased to put the matter in any form the meeting may approve, but I certainly do think that substantive resolutions ought to go before the minister. The instant I heard of Mr. Tite's notice in the

House of Commons, I put myself in communication with a connection of mine, who is a member of that House, and asked him to be kind enough to pilot me in such a way that I might be able to ensure a committee. He told me that in all probability Mr. Tite would be able to get that committee, but that if he could not get it, my friend certainly would ; and he said, "If the committee is formed, you shall be examined before it." Now the plan I had proposed in my own mind was, to bring before the committee, in the strongest way, the necessity of making a considerable alteration in the commission,—that is the most important part of our duty (hear, hear). Everything else is secondary to it. If that commission is reconstructed according to the commonest justice, all the evils will vanish away like smoke, and there will be no more difficulty about the matter. Only get the proper men to come down and satisfy the public that the thing is being carried out on right principles, that the patients really are insane, that the institutions are conducted according to the best scientific knowledge that we can command, and that men of honour are placed in these positions ; and then you may put any power in their hands, and you may appoint the proprietors of private lunatic asylums on the commission. Why should not men be appointed from private asylums ? As I said before, do not let the public be carried away with the idea that they want to hold the money question in their own hands. I believe that a great number of men, who are actuated by philanthropic feeling would gladly give up anything of that kind. I propose, therefore, that that should be a primary point insisted upon before the committee, that of enlarging the commission, so that they may take upon themselves all the duties of examining certificates, and take all the travelling into their own hands ; so that instead of sending barristers round, who are perfectly inefficient, medical men should take their place, one appointed from private asylums, and another from county asylums. You would then be able to get the information, which you want above everything else. It is not disparaging to those who are at the head of public asylums, men of the highest honour and reputation, to say that if they were elected (as in the case of Mr. Gaskell and Mr. Wilkes), and went fourth to give their opinions, if they saw anything in private establishments, they would be unable to give that information before the Commissioner which is valuable, because it is practical ? I believe it is not in the power of any one to know the exact position, painful as it is, that the proprietor of a private asylum occupies, unless he has

had some experience in them himself. I am firmly convinced of that, and nothing proves it better than the arbitrary and unnecessary remarks that have been made since these Commissioners have been appointed, with regard to the way in which the houses of private establishments are kept up. Their opinion that certain alterations should take place, clearly convinces me that they have been in the habit of suggesting to wealthy committees, alterations which can be accomplished at any moment with any sum of money. Now, I stand here a very independent man; I will explain my position before the meeting, in order that they may be assured that I have been seriously injured, even by the alterations which have taken place for the better. If these Commissioners had not been appointed, I should never have had the serious alterations in my house which have thrown an immense weight of debt upon me, which I think is a very grave evil. I do not think that any private individuals, ought to have it in their power to say, that this place, or that place does not suit. It is in this way that they come in conflict with the magistrates; for there is always a kind of war between the magistrates and the Commissioners, and between the two the proprietor goes to the wall. Before I ever received a sovereign for an insane person, I laid out between two and three thousand pounds on my own asylum. Therefore, I think it is a hard thing that I, and other honourable men, should have applied to us such epithets as were allowed to go before the country—implying that we were wicked extortioners, and desirous of winking at any amount of wickedness. It is a painful position to be put in, and I feel so much hurt at it, that I would rather be an honourable stone-breaker, a man whom nobody could bring any accusation against for doing wrong, than go forth to the public as a proprietor of a lunatic asylum, under the impression that I was a dishonourable man (hear, hear). I feel so strongly on the subject, that I have made up my mind to lay it before the public in a conspicuous way. John Bull is a very liberal person, but his sons are very illiberal, and I am sorry to say that the old fashioned plan of giving honour where it is due, has very much passed out of fashion now-a-days. Directly men hold situations they are suspected, instead of having the confidence of those who appoint them. The fact is, that those who have appointed them are themselves inefficient. The fault is higher up. Depend upon it, all the evil we complain of, arises out of the circumstances of the commission being an inefficient one, and

I shall bring the subject before the government the instant the committee is formed.

Dr. WOOD: I believe that although the public generally, and unfortunately the Commissioners as well, do not give us credit for honesty or integrity of purpose, we all feel a sincere desire to do what is right and what is best, for those entrusted to our care. It is true we get no credit for it, and I believe with Dr. Burnett, we have in a great measure to thank the Commissioners for that circumstance. It is very lamentable to think we do not get that support from the Commissioners which I think we ought to have. There is unfortunately a disposition to regard us all as unworthy of the trust reposed in us. There seems to be a sort of feeling in the public mind, encouraged by the Commissioners, that we are only a set of hirelings prepared to do anything for money. This prejudices our position with those whom we are willing to help, and whom it is our duty to help, and whom I think the majority of us have shown that we are not only willing and able to help, but have helped considerably. The position in which we are placed at present is this: if a patient is placed under our care, it is at once assumed that he has got into the hands of a rascal who will, if he can, keep him, whether he is sane or insane, and who will get all the money that is possible out of him. That is looked upon as our first motive, but I do think nothing has ever come out, except, perhaps, in an individual case here and there, which for one moment justifies such a degrading and base insinuation. I believe that in the profession at large, or in any other profession, there are not more honourable, more philanthropic, more benevolent men than are connected with the asylums of this country, and I believe there are no men so traduced, so vilified, no men treated with such contempt by those who ought to support them. I, therefore, sympathise very much with Dr. Burnett in all that he has said, and I cannot but feel that if we had justice done us by the Commissioners, we should not stand in the eyes of the public as we do. The society which Mr. Bolden represents may, perhaps, take strong views. I believe they do. At the same time we must give them the credit which we claim for ourselves of wishing to do what is right, of wishing to benefit the poor unfortunate creatures who are left to the mercy of men unworthy of the trust reposed in them. We should be very glad to hear what Mr. Bolden has to propose. But the first thing that is wanted is, that we should be recognized as honest men and gentlemen, and I believe until the Com-

missioners do regard us in that light, we can never occupy the position which is our due.

Dr. STEVENS: I feel some disappointment at what appears to be the probable result of this meeting. I am afraid it will go forth that the doctors assembled to grumble over their wrongs and nothing else, instead of taking into consideration the whole body of lunacy law, and seeing how far the different classes of insane are fairly or unfairly dealt by, and making such suggestions to the legislature as shall enable them to produce something more than this emasculated document.

The PRESIDENT: That is distinctly the object of the meeting, and it is with that view I requested Mr. Bolden to address us.

Dr. STEVENS: We have had no reference whatever made to the many classes of insane, whose condition ought to be ameliorated. There are, for instance, the parochial paupers who are suffered to rot in workhouses. Their condition might be remedied, by allowing the magistrates to order their removal to an asylum. Then there is the class a little above pauperism, the class that fills our county asylums, and they can only get to the county asylums by becoming parochial paupers. Such persons might probably be allowed to apply directly to a county asylum, and let the parish decide afterwards who should pay. Then there is the next class of insane persons—people in business with £200 or £300; they fill the lower classes of private asylums. I think for these people there should be some provision in the way of public asylums like our hospitals. Then we come to the larger and higher class of private houses; and there is a fifth class of insane persons, comprising those who will not come near a private house at all. Our proceedings to-day have been confined almost entirely to those classes that come under the Care and Treatment Bill. A great many observations have been made about the inquisitorial nature of the examiners' visits. They are unquestionably inquisitorial, but they are not calculated to answer the purpose intended. Undoubtedly an increased number of Commissioners would be better. But in a medico-ethical point of view, have we not put ourselves in a position to be spoken of as we are? Would it not be better that men of a high and noble profession should have all the monetary part of asylums taken out of their hands and handed over to some lay individual? I do not think it would interfere with the profession at all, or with the receipts. A physician in

psychological practice would send his patient to a house, and would have nothing to do with money transactions. The payment for board, and so on, would go to the proprietor, while the physician would charge for his visits. This is not a chimera. I can mention asylums where it is in practice. In such cases the physician himself occupies the position of a medical examiner. He would complain to the person keeping the house, "You do not do this, that, or the other." This might, I am sure, be brought about by slow degrees. I cannot concur in Dr. Winslow's objection to the clause which prevents the proprietor of a private asylum from being made a Commissioner in Lunacy, because that would throw doubt upon these men directly. I can easily understand the proprietor of a private house being made a Commissioner, and having the suspicion cast upon him, an unjust one, no doubt, of favouring a particular asylum. Commissioners have great powers in recommending people to be sent to this, that, or the other asylum, and we must avoid any chance or possibility of suspicion. That is the way to put ourselves in a better position.

Dr. BUCKNILL suggested that the resolution should be divided into two parts. So far as he had been able to discover the sense of this meeting it was unanimous in condemning the appointment of medical examiners, as proposed in the bill; but he thought that strong arguments might be adduced in favour of the clause which disqualifies medical men interested in private asylums from signing certificates for the purpose of confining persons in private asylums.

Dr. Bucknill's recommendation having been adopted, the first part of the resolution, relating to the medical examiners, was then put to the meeting, and unanimously adopted. The second part was not put.

Mr. BOLDEN: I feel flattered in having been permitted to attend here, and I must congratulate myself, and the society I represent, that this bill is so very bad that it has induced you to come forward and render your assistance now, and to aid those gentlemen whom I represent, in asking for an enquiry into the laws of lunacy. I fully concur in nearly all the observations I have heard here to-night, more especially those which fell from the gentleman on my left (Dr. Winslow.) There is hardly a single observation which he made in which I do not concur. There are, no doubt, individuals amongst those whom I represent that entertain extreme opinions, but such opinions are not those of the parties with whom I usually act. What we have been seeking for, year after

year, is an inquiry, so that suggestions may be received from every person capable of giving them, as to the best mode to be adopted for the proper care and treatment of lunatics. I am sure there is not one of you that has not at heart the same object. I am certain it has always been the feeling of the gentlemen with whom I act, that proprietors of asylums are anxious to do their duty to those placed under their care. They are subject, however, to much annoyance in one form or another; and a great part of the duties they have to perform are really mechanical, such as making returns and the like. But what we say is this: the great thing is to secure, before a patient is placed under confinement, that he is not improperly placed there. That is the chief point, and there I should be willing to stop, because I am certain if a party is once placed properly under confinement, the greater seclusion you can give, the greater quietude, the better; so that every remedial measure may be adopted, and the patients' feelings may not be excited by the medical examiner just as you have begun to soothe them. I put this bill on one side. These medical examiners are neither one thing nor another, neither fish, flesh, nor fowl (laughter.) Their duties are undefined, and I think we may set the bill on one side entirely. In attending here, my object was to ask the assistance of this association, in endeavouring to obtain an amendment of the whole laws made, and offering such suggestions for their general improvement, as you may be enabled to make from your practical experience, and the many opportunities you have of judging what is best to be done. With regard to increasing the number of the Commissioners, that certainly does appear desirable. As to the supervision, I think many of you proprietors would prefer having more frequent supervision, so as to take a certain amount of responsibility from you. But the society to which I belong, starts with this: give us first of all a preliminary enquiry of a satisfactory nature; you do that now with the pauper to a certain extent; but I maintain that the great thing is, to satisfy the complaint so generally made by parties who have been placed under confinement, viz., that there was no proper enquiry, and that the thing was done in secret. As regards the care and treatment of the patients, that really must depend upon the character of the parties who have them under their care and custody. We are not angels, and people can only depend upon character. If a gentleman is found to cure above the average number of patients, he will secure public confidence. But, in many

instances, establishments appear to be getting filled with chronic cases, so that you cannot expect to get the number of cures which you have in other houses. What is sought for is, that the lunatic shall be properly taken care of ; that he shall get those comforts and appliances which his position entitles him to. There is one provision here, the result of which must, in some measure, depend upon the mode in which the Commissioners deal with it ; it is one which I am aware they have long endeavoured to get from you, that is, the amount paid for the various patients. Now, that is making it far too much a lodging-house question ; the Commissioners overlook the skill of the medical man, and the attention which he pays to the patient. I fear, with the Commissioners, this is too much a question of pounds, shillings, and pence. I say again, first of all, take care that the patient is properly confined, and then we must trust to the medical man under whose care he is placed. We entrust our lives to medical men in cases of ordinary disease, and why should we not entrust to you also the care of the mind, when it is afflicted, as well as of the body. It is said by some we ought not to have private asylums ; but I fear we are not far enough advanced yet, for any such change. I think something should be done for the middle classes. It must be often a source of great anxiety to yourselves, especially when a party in struggling circumstances is placed in your establishment, and you see the case requires more care and attention than the remuneration enables you to give. Another complaint that has been frequently made is, that patients, when they are confined in asylums, are too frequently debarred from intercourse with their relatives (no, no). I am not stating that that complaint is a just one, but merely that it is made. The correspondence of patients should be as free as possible ; at any rate, the patient himself should not feel that he was debarred from intercourse with the outer world. In making these observations, I am asking you, gentlemen, who are so well acquainted with all the workings of the lunatic mind, that you should yourselves offer to the committee proposed to be nominated, such suggestions as, from your practical experience, you think will be most beneficial for the care and treatment of the lunatic. I am certain, if that is done, there is not one member amongst them whom I represent, but will feel that you have fairly and honourably done your duty ; and, if any suggestions are made by us, which you may feel ought not to be adopted, I am certain that your great experience will have far more weight with the committee than any opinions

of ours. But bear in mind, the point I seek above all others is, preliminary enquiry. We want a general enquiry as to what can be done to amend the laws as they now stand, to remove objectionable portions of it, and also to increase the power of inspection ; so that parties may not complain that they have been confined for months without seeing any official person. But those who make their supervision must be men of recognized position. Those of us who have anything to do with counties, know very well the manner in which the appointments are often made by the magistrates ; and I fear, therefore, if the magistrates are to have the appointment of these medical examiners, it will lead to discord throughout the country. As the medical examiners are to be paid out of the county rates, the parties will, no doubt, take care of their pockets.

Dr. WINSLOW moved—"That the Committee appointed to-day to
"consider the Bills brought in by the Government for the
"amendment of the laws relating to the care and treatment of
"the insane confined in public and private asylums, be authorized to draw up, and submit to her Majesty's Government,
"suggestions for a complete revision of the law of lunacy, and
"that members of the association be invited to transmit to the
"committee any suggestions that may occur to them for the
"amendment of the laws relating to the insane."

Seconded by Dr. ROBERTSON, and passed unanimously.

Dr. WOOD: I do not think it possible that this bill can pass in its present form, but one of the recommendations or suggestions of Mr. Bolden seems to me to be after all the one that we must all desire, because it would have the effect of relieving us of some responsibility, and doing away with the possibility of the charge that we were taking care of patients merely from interested motives. If we can satisfy the public, that before a patient is placed under control he has been duly certified to be a proper person for an asylum, our position is at once considerably improved. The difficulty of doing that, however, is very considerably greater, perhaps, than Mr. Bolden supposes. There are many patients, I need not tell the gentlemen present, whose insanity only manifests itself under certain circumstances and at very uncertain intervals. It is next to impossible to say that a particular patient shall at a certain hour be in a fit condition to be certified by any medical examiner : even by yourself Sir, or by any other person in an equally eminent position. However competent a medical examiner may be, it is impossible that he should always be able to say, "This patient is insane, and ought to go into an asylum." That is the great difficulty that presents

itself in carrying out the propositions. But it has occurred to me, that it is just possible the difficulty might be met in this way. Presuming (what the public are not at present disposed to presume) that medical men are gentlemen and honest men, that the ordinary medical attendant of the patient should, upon the application of his friends, be authorised to certify that the individual was in that state of mind that required some supervision; and upon that one certificate authority should be given to the friends to keep the patient under some sort of surveillance until a competent and authorised person should be able to sign a certificate, it might be 24 hours or 48, or three or four days. If we could, in the first instance, secure the safety of the patient by permitting, or making it legal to exercise some authority and control over him in his own home, we might afterwards, the sooner the better, subject him to a more strict and more professional examination by a person who should be competent legally to certify for his admission to a hospital. I should be glad to hear the opinions of the gentlemen present, whether they think such a scheme feasible or practicable. It is one that has occurred to myself, and I do not know of any that is more likely to meet the difficulty that presents itself.

Dr. WINSLOW: There is a very important point which we should not lose sight of, in considering the question of legislation on the subject of lunacy, and the necessity of a strict preparatory examination before any person alleged to be insane is placed under any condition of restraint. We have fortunately, now, a medical council representing all the great medical institutions of the country, and also representing Her Majesty's Government. Some suggestion might be made whereby this medical council might be delegated with the authority of instituting some preliminary examination—sending one of their members to see any person who is represented to be insane after being certified to be so, preparatory to his being placed under restraint, and if that independent medical gentleman holding a very high position, supposed to represent an important corporate body, or even Her Majesty's Government, saw just reasons for the imputation of insanity, he could endorse the medical certificate, previously to the party being placed under confinement. I suggested at Edinburgh, that there should be something like an officer of health, some competent person who had the superintendence of a district, and that he should be called in to see a person alleged to be insane, and that no step leading to confinement should be taken, until this in-

dependent medical officer had satisfied his own mind that the medical men who had certified were right in their impression that the party was a fit subject for restraint. I think, having a medical council, we might make use of that important body, and that they might be delegated with the authority of exercising that amount of supervision over those persons alleged to be insane. In that way, the public, I think, would to a certain extent be satisfied that every care, every precaution was taken preparatory to confinement. I quite think with Mr. Bolden, that that is where the shoe pinches. The outcry is made, that A, or B, has been seen by a person quite incompetent to say whether he was insane or not; that a medical man has been called into the sick chamber, perhaps exchanged three or four words with him, and then gone into the next chamber to sign the certificate, and without more ado the man has been hustled into a cab, and driven to an asylum. I have often heard of such observations made by eminent legal men, and other men out of the profession. The great objection has been to the extent of the authority with which the law invests two medical men. That is the difficulty which you have to meet. If I were examined before a Committee of the House, I should say, I have been eighteen or nineteen years connected with lunatic asylums, and I never saw a person sent to an asylum on the certificates of two medical men who ought not to be sent to that asylum—was not in a condition of mind to justify the restraint. There has been only one case, in the experience of twenty years, about which I had any doubt. A young gentleman was placed under my care, who was, no doubt, either very vicious, wicked, or insane. He was quite a youth, of a good family, but he was the cause of great annoyance; threatening to murder his brothers and sisters, and to set fire to the house, and committing many acts which bore a great resemblance to insanity; and it was perhaps charitable of the family, and of the medical men to attribute those actions to an insane state of mind. It certainly was a question with me, whether he was not more fit for a prison, or some intermediate institution between a prison and an asylum, and I suggested to the father that he should remove him. That is the only case within my long experience in which I entertained the shadow of a doubt as to the propriety of a person being placed under restraint after he had been duly certified. I state this for the honor of the medical profession. But notwithstanding this,—and your experience, and the experience of others would

bear me out in what I have said, still there is no question, that that is the point that the public fix upon, and we are bound to submit to the prejudices of the public, based, as they undoubtedly are, upon humane views; and we should willingly consent, nay, even the suggestion should come from ourselves, that every kind of precaution should be taken before a patient's liberty is in the slightest degree interfered with. That is the point to which we should direct our attention; and having got over that difficulty, having certificates of the medical men backed by some competent and independent authority, when a man is once placed under curative treatment, let him be kept in a state of quietude and repose, whilst being carried through that remedial course. If a man is sent to a hospital with a fractured thigh, the surgeon puts the bones in a state of apposition, and mechanically confines them there; but what would you say to a man who went into the ward of a hospital and said, "I doubt whether that man's legs are fractured; I have come to examine him: take off the splints, and let me see;" and then twisted the man's limbs about, to see whether there was a fracture or not? What kind of union would take place under those circumstances? It is the same with the intellect, in cases of insanity there is a lesion of the intellect: to use the appropriate expression of the French, a disruption of a man's ideas; an interference with the healthy continuity of thought; and he is placed under treatment for the purpose of having that mental lesion healed; and I say it is a most unjust and iniquitous thing, after he is placed in a state of quietude, to allow any person to interfere with the course of treatment which the medical proprietor of the asylum may think it his duty to adopt for the restoration of his patient.

The PRESIDENT: It has been suggested by the learned counsel that we have not taken the least notice of the Public Asylums Bill. The truth is, there is so much before us that it is almost impossible to include everything. My own feelings are very strong upon the misgovernment of public asylums, and the impossibility of certain alterations which they are making being properly attended to. If I mistake not there is a case in the Old Bailey to day of the murder of one patient by another in a large asylum, where no blame can be thrown upon any body except that the asylum is so enormously large that it is impossible for a small number of officers to attend to it. The rule seems to be, to increase the number of patients and to diminish the number of medical officers, so that the same principle appears to be going through

the whole, that medical men are always to be disregarded, that seems to be the sort of principle in the public mind. It was exactly so in the Crimean War. Not the least attention was paid to the medical authority until the men were without clothes, bedding, medicines, and the like, and the consequences we know very well. The subject therefore of public asylums will, I imagine, come before the committee, and occupy their serious attention.

Mr. : There is one point that has hitherto escaped the attention of the meeting, one, perhaps, that the committee will excuse my laying before them: If a general medical practitioner has signed a certificate of lunacy, and the patient has been taken to an asylum upon that certificate, and afterwards liberated upon the opinion of the medical examiner, it seems to me that the patient will have it in his power to bring an action for false imprisonment against the medical man for signing the certificate. This seems to me to be worthy of attentive consideration because the thing as it were defeats itself. One effect of this would be that the medical men finding themselves exposed to danger would decline in all cases of doubtful lunacy to sign at all; hence a large number of persons of doubtful sanity would be debarred from treatment which would restore them to mental health.

Dr. NISBET moved "That this Meeting having sufficient confidence in the Committee of the Association for the amendment of the laws of lunacy, beg to recommend that when they have prepared their suggestions they should call together the members of the Association for the purpose of their being considered."

Dr. SEATON seconded the motion.

Dr. WINSLOW said it was the intention of the Committee to issue circulars to all members of the society requesting them to send their views and suggestions with regard to the present state of the law of lunacy.

On the motion of Dr. WINSLOW, Dr. BUCKNILL, and Mr. MARSHALL; the names of Dr. Hood, Dr. Andrew Wynter, and Mr. Paul, were added to the committee.

Dr. WINSLOW: I beg to move a vote of thanks to you, Sir, for kindly summoning the Association and presiding over its deliberations, and also for the kindness and urbanity which you have displayed during these proceedings.

The PRESIDENT: I am very much obliged to you for the honour you have done me. I have very great pleasure in meeting so many honorable and accomplished gentlemen

engaged in such a very important department of practice. Anything that depends upon me shall always be readily and cheerfully done in compliance with their wishes, as long as I have the honour to hold the office I now fill (applause).

The Meeting was then adjourned to the 26th of March.

The Efficacy of Bran Bread in relieving Despondency in Melancholia, and allaying Mental Irritability, dependent on an irregular and constipated State of the Bowels.

(Anonymous.)

The title of this article will probably on the first impression provoke a smile; and that so simple and seemingly inert a substance as bran should exert so much influence, does appear extraordinary. But it is necessary to reflect before arriving at any conclusion, that it is by these simple means—working gradually, but continuously—that nature effects in time such unlooked for ends. Watch the continued effects of water, drop by drop, on hard stone, or the growth of stalactites and stalacmites in caverns, both of which operations are imperceptible, but still the effect most marked, if visited at distant periods.

In like manner does this simple substance “bran,” when persisted in from week to week, exercise a most decided and beneficial influence over the bodies and minds of persons afflicted with chronic disorders, especially do I allude to those of the digestive organs, with the whole train of melancholy symptoms, of those unfortunates on whose welfare I am now engaged.

We read in Dr. Paris’s *Pharmacologia*, vol. 1, page 166:—“The addition of bran to our bread, constituting what is known by the name of ‘brown bread,’ induces laxative effects, merely from the mechanical friction of the rough particles, or scales of the bran, upon the inner coats of the intestine; for the wheat without the bran in bread is not particularly laxative.”

Now, although I was aware of this passage, and had tried the effects of bread made from brown meal, I had never thought of using it on a large scale, or adopting it as a system, until a neighbouring practitioner suggested it as a