

and the propriety of such a legal provision, if likely to regulate the illicit treatment of the insane now engaged in. Mr. Bagot, on the other hand, apparently prefers that every case of insanity should be swept into the asylums of the country, and holds that official information which is not necessarily followed up by official inspection is utterly futile. The unanimously favourable opinion of commissioners, specialists, and family physicians in Scotland, regarding this valuable provision of the Scottish Lunacy Acts, gets short shrift at the hands of Mr. Bagot. The result was that the deputation was advised to go direct to the Lord Chancellor.

Lunacy Act Amendment Bill.

Lunacy Legislation Amendment, to the extent of thirty-nine clauses, is again necessary, and, we regret to add, does not by any means exhaust the opportunities of amendment in the Lunacy Law.

Many of the proposed alterations are of a comparatively slight character, but others are of the utmost importance to our specialty.

The superannuation scheme is one which will probably be opposed by most members of our specialty, and accepted by few; it is to be regretted that a more united opinion does not prevail. The Poor Law Officers' Superannuation Act, which, with certain favourable modifications, it is proposed to follow, does not err on the side of liberality, but the advantages of continuity of service, with the possible addition of ten years to the length of service in special cases, may bring superannuations to something near equality with the existing scale, while the certainty of pension would be an advantage outweighing considerable loss of possibilities. To render it acceptable the age of 50 years must be the lower limit at which superannuation is possible.

The granting of allowances and gratuities in cases of injury under Section 24 is a most satisfactory advance.

The power of granting remuneration to patients for their labour (Section 28) is another satisfactory sign of progress, which may become of great importance in asylum management.

Little can be said in regard to the clauses which bring the lunatic hospitals under the same relation to the Commissioners as other asylums, but Clause 16, in restricting

their branch establishments, would seem to put undue restraint upon the development of the cottage system.

The jurisdiction of the County Court Judge, in cases of small property, conferred by Section 9, is a great improvement, but the limit of annual income, instead of being fifty pounds, might well have been drawn at one hundred, as in the similar provision in the Scottish law.

Urgency orders by the first Section of the Act are to be limited in their action to four days, instead of seven, as in the existing Act. This will probably lead to a great deal of inconvenience, and will possibly lead to the occasional setting at liberty of persons acutely insane, an evil much greater than any which this change of procedure can possibly counteract.

The scheme of penalties to be inflicted for erroneous reports under Clause 29 savours rather of legislation against habitual criminals than for the direction of the members of an honourable profession.

We append a summary of the Bill in '*Notes and News*,' to which we refer our readers for the less important changes.

The Alleged Increase of Lunacy in England and Wales.

The special report of the Commissioners in Lunacy to the Lord Chancellor has lately been issued. They state that whereas in 1859 the number of lunatics, idiots, and persons of unsound mind in England and Wales, reported to the department as resident in asylums and other establishments for the insane, and in workhouses, or with their relatives or others, was 36,762, the number had increased in 1896 to 96,446, showing a ratio to every 10,000 of the population of 31.38, as compared with 18.67 at the previous period. The replies received from the Medical Superintendents of Asylums indicated that 10 were of opinion that occurring insanity has increased, while 30 were of a contrary opinion, and 22 were unable to arrive at a definite conclusion. The Commissioners point out that it is a noticeable and important fact that while the increase in the number of pauper patients has been from 31,401 to 87,417, that in the private class has only been from 4,679 to 8,265, the ratios having risen from 15.95 to 28.44 for paupers, and from 2.38 to 2.69 only for private patients, per 10,000 of the population. It is obvious, therefore, that the increase in numbers and ratios has been almost entirely confined to pauper patients, and that the class upon whom