

in private asylums near to the public ones, for which funds would be readily forthcoming? To thrust "lunatics who are not poor persons" under the treatment of Asylum Physicians, without their permission or remuneration, is a cool piece of injustice. To mix them with lunatic paupers, with the knowledge that they will interfere with the successful treatment of the latter, would be a most unwise abandonment of the main principle, which ought to dictate every clause of this bill, namely the welfare of the lunatic poor.

The 108th, being the last clause, provides that the Inspectors shall frame all the forms required by the Act. The forms of an Act of this kind are more important than most of its clauses, and it would surely have been better to have required the Inspectors to frame them before the Act is past, so as to have them embodied therein.

J. C. B.

*Association of Medical Officers of Asylums and Hospitals
for the Insane.*

Report of the Committee appointed at the Special General Meeting, held at the Great Western Hotel, Paddington, on Saturday the 28th of February, 1859, 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, and to make suggestions for a revision of the Laws of Lunacy.

The committee have to report that in pursuance of their instructions they have carefully considered all the provisions of the existing laws relating to public and private asylums, those statutes being the 8 & 9 Vict., c. 100, the 16 & 17 Vict., c. 96, the 16 & 17 Vict., c. 97, and the 18 & 19 Vict., c. 105, and also the alterations proposed by the Lunatics (Care and Treatment) Bill, and the Lunatic Asylums Bill. They have been assisted in their labours by many valuable communications from members of the Association, all of which have received full consideration.

With respect to the Lunatics (Care and Treatment) Bill, the committee are unanimous in condemning its principal provisions, and they confidently expect the concurrence of the Association. The following are their resolutions upon this bill.

I. That the contemplated appointment of Medical Examiners, under the Bill, is highly objectionable, inasmuch as they would probably in most cases be gentlemen imperfectly acquainted with insanity; that their visits would cause much disturbance to the patients, and would consequently have an injurious effect upon them; and that the proposed system of secret reports is one in every respect to be condemned.

II. That the time allowed in clause 10 for sending notices of admissions and copies of orders and certificates is unnecessarily restricted, and would be of no advantage to the patient.

III. That clause 15, depriving Medical Practitioners, being wholly or partly proprietors of any licensed house, of the power of certifying to the existence of insanity with a view to the reception of a patient in any other licensed house, is objectionable, inasmuch as it would most unnecessarily prohibit a very competent class of men from signing certificates, and would thereby inflict an injury not only on them, but also to a greater extent upon the public.

IV. That clause 26 is objectionable, as making it compulsory on the part of the proprietor of a licensed house to submit a full statement of his private affairs to the inspection and consideration of the Commissioners; instead of which if the Commissioner should in any particular case have reason to believe that a patient has not sufficient allowed him, or entertain any doubt as to the proper appropriation of his income, or of the sum of money paid for his care and treatment, the committee would suggest that they should have the power of ascertaining the amount paid to the proprietor for such patient.

The Committee have further resolved to recommend to the Association the following points, as desirable alterations to be made in the laws relating to private asylums.

V. That the visitation of licensed houses throughout the country should be uniform, and by the Commissioners; and not, as at present, divided between the Commissioners and the local justices.

VI. That the number of the paid Commissioners should be increased.

VII. That the powers of the Commissioners should be more distinctly defined, and that an appeal should be provided for those who feel themselves aggrieved by their decisions.

VIII. That in all cases in which new licenses shall be

granted, the name of a medical man should be inserted as co-licensee, who should be made jointly responsible for the management of the house, and the treatment of the patients.

IX. That the time during which the certificates in the case of an escaped patient remain in force should be extended.

X. That patients should be admissible into any licensed house upon their own notice in writing to the Commissioners, without any order or certificates; and that such notice should hold good for one month, and be from time to time renewable at the discretion of the Commissioners.

In addition to the above recommendations, the Committee have to suggest that the Association should take into consideration the question whether the provision that no person shall be a Commissioner who, within one year next preceding his appointment, has been directly or indirectly interested in any licensed house, or in the profits of such reception, should or should not be repealed.

In the event of the Association considering this proposal, the Committee would ask them to consider whether the following provisions might obviate the objections which exist to such an alteration.

XI. That in the event of any person having any interest in a licensed house being appointed a Commissioner, he should, within three months of his appointment, state on oath that his interest, direct or indirect, had ceased, and that in the interval he should not visit the house in question, or vote in any matter connected with it.

With respect to the laws relating to public asylums, the Committee have very few suggestions to make. They would recommend to the Association the adoption of the following resolution:

XII. That provision should be made for restricting the power given to the visitors to remove the officers of an asylum: and that, as regards the Medical Superintendent, as chief officer of the asylum, an appeal should lie to the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

The Committee have no objections to make to the Lunatic Asylums Bill, the provisions of which they consider to be desirable alterations in the existing laws on the subject.

The Committee have not thought it desirable to enter upon the subject of inquisitions in lunacy, nor to take into consideration the Lunacy Regulation Act, (16 & 17 Vict., c. 70). Notice has been given in the House of Commons by the Solicitor General of his intention to introduce a Bill to

amend this Act. None of the provisions of this proposed Bill have as yet transpired ; and the subject is, perhaps, more for the consideration of the legal than of the medical profession.

Several letters from Irish members of the association have been laid before the committee, stating objections to the alterations in the law which are contained in the Lunatic Poor (Ireland) Bill. While the committee regret the dissatisfaction which appears to have been caused to these members by the Bill in question, they do not feel themselves competent to deal with this subject. They therefore recommend that the association should appoint a committee consisting of those members of their body who are resident in Ireland, which committee should be authorised to consider the laws for the regulation of asylums in that country, and the proposed Bill upon the subject ; and to report thereon to the association. The Select Committee of the House of Commons now sitting will only deal with the subject of lunacy and lunatic asylums in England and Wales ; but another Select Committee is to be appointed to consider the Irish Bill.

In the event of the members of the association agreeing with the committee in the propriety of supporting any or all of the above suggestions for amendments in the existing laws, and in the objections to the new bills (which have been arranged under the above twelve distinct heads in order that they may be considered separately, and either adopted or rejected by the General Meeting on the 26th inst.), it will be for them to determine upon the course of action to be adopted in order to enforce their views upon the attention of the legislature.

Several courses are open for the attainment of this end ; those which suggest themselves to the committee are as follows :

I. That a deputation from the association should request an interview with the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and should endeavour to obtain his support to their views.

II. That a memorial, embodying the matters which the association desire to support, should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Home Department ; such memorial to be signed by as many as possible of the members of the association.

III. That a petition shall be presented to the House of Commons, praying for such amendments in the laws as are

desired by the association, and against the objectionable provisions of the new Bills.

IV. That an entirely new Bill or Bills should be prepared, containing the alterations which are desired by the association, and that some member of the House of Commons should be induced to introduce such Bill or Bills, and to endeavour to have them referred to the Select Committee now sitting.

V. That a deputation of the Association should be elected to offer to give evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, and to represent there the views of the Association.

VI. That the Association should apply to the House of Commons for leave to be heard by their counsel, before the Select Committee.

Of the above courses, the first and fifth appear to the Committee to be the most desirable. They therefore recommend that the Association should apply to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, requesting him to receive a deputation from their body; such deputation to be named at the General Meeting on the 26th inst., in order that they may be in readiness to act immediately upon receiving the Secretary of State's assent.

It will be remembered, that, by the terms of the resolutions passed at the General Meeting, on the 28th of February, the Committee might themselves have submitted to the Government their suggestions for a revision of the law of lunacy; but they have not thought it advisable to do so until they should be assured that the Association as a body concurs with them as to the suggestions which should be made.

The Committee desire, in conclusion, to acknowledge their sense of the value of the services of their Honorary Secretary, EDWARD T. CONOLLY, Esq., Barrister-at-Law, who has so liberally placed his valuable time at their disposal.

J. CONOLLY, M.D.,

Chairman of the Committee.

10, King's Bench Walk, Temple, London, E.C.,
19th March, 1859.

NOTE. *The following members of the Committee withdrew their names therefrom, before the above report was drawn up: Dr. Stevens, Dr. Bucknill, Dr. Hood, and Dr. Campbell.*