

## OCCASIONAL NOTES OF THE QUARTER.

*Superannuation-Pensions of Medical Officers of County Asylums.*

Recent discussions at Quarter Sessions have brought the important question of superannuation prominently before the notice of asylum medical officers. Anyone who has read reports of the proceedings of Dorset, Norfolk, and Berkshire Quarter Sessions in January cannot fail to be impressed with the very unsatisfactory state of matters as regards the superannuation of asylum medical officers, and the uncertainty of their position in this respect, for the agitation against pensions appears to be chiefly directed towards obtaining a reduction in the amount proposed to be granted to the medical superintendent, some even going the length of advocating the total abolition of pensions.

Let us briefly state a few facts in proof of this assertion.

1. The Dorset Asylum Committee recommended a pension of £600 a year, being two-thirds of total estimated value of office, to their able superintendent, who has served 32 years. The various Boards of Guardians organized an agitation against the pension as excessive in amount, which was so successful that the Magistrates at Quarter Sessions rejected the Committee's recommendation by the large majority of 39 to 13, suggestions being thrown out that a reduced amount should be asked for at the April Sessions.

The Earl of Eldon remarked, "he did not like to give his consent to the doctrine that when a man had served a certain time, he was entitled to a pension as a matter of course. He must protest against Mr. Glyn's argument that they must give Dr. Symes something for his 30 years' service."

Lord E. Cecil remarked, "I am not hostile to the pension, but I plead for the sake of the ratepayers."

Mr. Montagu Guest said, "it seemed to him the public feeling was against this pension being granted. He thought it was an excessive proposal to make under the circumstances."

Major Groves said, "he much regretted that he felt bound to oppose the granting of the pension of £600, not upon the ground that Mr. Symes had not done his duty, but

because he objected to the argument which was so much spoken of, that because a man had done his duty he was to receive a very large pension. He had heard not only the opinions of the ratepayers, but those of almost all other classes in the county, and they were all decidedly against the pension."

If Mr. Symes, with such efficient and lengthened service of 32 years, is not worthy of and entitled to the maximum two-thirds pension, it is hard to tell who is. Such observations and decision, emphatically expressed at the Dorset Quarter Sessions, tend to discourage asylum officers, and are calculated to shake their confidence in the sympathy and generous dealing of the County Magistrates towards them in the matter of a retiring allowance.

Surely a medical superintendent, who has to combat the risks, worries, and anxieties of asylum life, is worthy of and entitled to at least as much consideration as officers in Her Majesty's service and Civil servants, who are free from the uncertainties and anomalies of our permissive system of superannuation, and are not subjected to suspense or the indignity of begging for their recognized pension.

The question may be asked, when, and for what length and quality of service, may a medical superintendent reasonably expect the maximum two-thirds on retirement under our present system? And what amount may he reasonably expect for any period after 15 years' service?

2. The Committee of the Norfolk Asylum recommended a pension of £600 a year, being rather less than two-thirds of total estimated value of office to their superintendent after a meritorious service of 25 years, which was confirmed at the January Quarter Sessions, although not without a grumble and an attempt to obtain a reduction in the amount.

"Lord Wodehouse thought that £600 was an enormous sum to give. He thought that £500 a year would be amply sufficient, and he moved accordingly," but this amendment he subsequently withdrew.

The Earl of Kimberley said, "it was open to remark that Dr. Hills was 59, whereas with other services a man must be 60 years of age before he was pensioned. Nothing was so burdensome as pensions, and nothing required such careful consideration as the amount of a pension which was given."\*

\* Ever since the Norfolk pension has been granted, Boards of Guardians in that county continue to agitate and protest against what they consider an excessive pension, as the following resolutions will show:—

3. The Committee of the Asylum for the County of Berks, Borough of Reading, and Borough of Newbury, recommended a pension of £400 a year, being one-half of the total estimated value of office to their medical superintendent, who resigned on account of ill-health after a service of nearly 17 years. This amount has been confirmed by the Berkshire Quarter Sessions, and the two boroughs named, the Chairman at the Berkshire Sessions, however, remarking that "the whole of the superannuation allowance was £400, undoubtedly a large sum."

The foregoing facts are significant, and seem to indicate that the time has arrived when a combined, earnest, and practical attempt should be made to alter or modify the permissive system, and to get the superannuation of asylum officers and servants placed upon a more satisfactory basis, according to some fixed scale and period of service, on the lines of the Medico-Psychological Association Resolutions of August, 1879, or otherwise, as may be thought best.

In connection with this subject, the Suggestive Report of the Parliamentary and Pensions Committee of the Medico-Psychological Association, dated December, 1882, and signed by the Chairman, Dr. Lockhart Robertson, is well worthy of serious consideration. It suggests a scheme of readjustment of the 4s. grant, which, instead of going to the Unions, should be paid to County Financial Boards towards County Asylum expenditure, including salaries, wages, pensions, repairs and enlargement of the fabric.

As Editors of the Association Journal we wish to help forward this good and just cause, and we naturally look to

**EPINGHAM.—PROTEST AGAINST DR. HILLS' PENSION.**—At a meeting of Guardians of this Union at Beckham, on Monday, February 14th, it was unanimously resolved: "That this Board, having heard that a retiring pension of £600 per annum was recently granted at the Norfolk magistrates' meeting to Dr. Hills, lately Medical Superintendent to the County Asylum, desire to express their opinion that such a sum is excessive, and they desire to protest against such large sums of the ratepayers' money being voted away for that and similar purposes."

**THE AYLHAM GUARDIANS AND THE LATE MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT OF THORPE ASYLUM.**—At the usual fortnightly meeting of the Guardians of this Union, held on Tuesday, February 15th, Mr. J. S. Hickling presided. The usual business having been disposed of, the following resolution was carried: "Resolved unanimously that the superannuation allowance of £600 a year recently granted by the Court of Quarter Sessions to Dr. Hills on his retirement from the post of medical superintendent of Thorpe Asylum, is, in the opinion of this Board, excessive, having regard to the present depression of the agricultural interest, and the heavy burden now imposed on the ratepayers by the county rates, and this Board desires to protest against such large pensions being granted by the county magistrates in future."

the Lunacy Commissioners to show their sympathy with asylum officers in a practical way by bringing the question of pensions under the notice of the Government, either in connection with the proposed County Boards Bill or the Lunacy Bill now under discussion in the House of Lords. It is to be hoped that the large-hearted sympathy of the late Lord Shaftesbury with the staff of asylums still permeates the Lunacy Board. Perhaps the Commissioners would be disposed to receive a deputation on the subject.

As is well known, medical officers in the prison departments have seven years added to service. Further, the Treasury would allow "an injury allowance" in addition to this, should a medical officer be obliged to retire in consequence of receiving an injury whilst in the performance of his duty.

Lord Monkswell's amendment to the Lunacy Bill now before Parliament, and adopted by the Lord Chancellor, will, if the Bill become law, allow superintendents to reckon their service in more than one asylum in the same county, a principle adopted in the Police Superannuation Bill of the late Government. Dr. Murray Lindsay, who has done more than anyone in advocating the claims of superintendents, has for years maintained the justice of counting service in different asylums towards a pension, whether in the same county or not.

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*Dr. Rutherford and his Assistant Medical Officer.*

We have deferred commenting on the unhappy incident which has occurred at the Institution at Dumfries, of which Dr. Rutherford is the esteemed Superintendent, until in possession of the official Report upon the charges made against the management of one of the houses of the asylum by the Junior Medical Assistant, Dr. David Lennox. It may be briefly stated that on June 11th, 1886, this officer resigned after seven months' service. When Dr. Rutherford became aware, a week afterwards, of this fact, he at once suspended him, a proceeding which was confirmed by the Board of Direction. The result was an official inquiry into the above charges by the Scotch Lunacy Board. The following is the memorandum made by this Board for the Trustees and Directors of the Crichton Royal Institution as to the inquiry by the Board, under section 11 of 20 and 21 Vic., Cap. 71, into the charges brought against the management