

in the House of Commons in regard to the actual state of matters, and the urgent need for a compulsory system of assured pensions. The literature of the subject is now so voluminous that every conceivable argument has been brought into play. On the one hand, we have heard how the West Riding asylums have been deprived of pensions in consideration of an increase in pay—an increase totally inadequate to make provision for old age. On the other hand we have heard how other similar services have been dealt with, and equal claims on consideration made for asylum officials. We cannot but feel, let the result be what it may, that the Parliamentary Committee has done its best throughout this protracted struggle.

Turning to more satisfactory phases, we are glad to observe that the clauses relating to the private care of cases of incipient insanity have been retained, and that a new clause for the establishment of pathological laboratories has been inserted. This last alteration will give an impetus to the plans formulated by certain medical superintendents in the Midlands, and will, we trust, remove the last obstacle to the fruition of their hopes.

A clause, which is more important from a political than from a scientific point of view, has been added to give power to a local authority to appoint not more than one third of the visiting committee of its asylums from persons not members of the local authority. It is by no means clear how such a provision was thought to be necessary, and it is unlikely that the House of Commons will pass a clause so directly antagonistic to the system of local government built up of late years.

It may be, indeed, that the introduction of such contentious matter will affect the fortunes of the Bill, and that we shall yet see it re-introduced in coming years. At any rate, the discussion sure to be awakened by this clause may incite to a fuller consideration of the whole measure than it might otherwise have had.

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*Laboratory of the Scottish Asylums.*

The third annual report of the Pathologist has been published. It relates to the year 1899, and gives evidence of a success which has been well deserved by the indefatigable

industry of Dr. Ford Robertson. He states that nine gentlemen have been given a laboratory course of instruction. Four were assistant medical officers of the associated asylums, two were from English asylums, and three were not officially connected with such institutions. After a reference to the library which is being gradually formed, Dr. Ford Robertson goes on to show what reports have been made and consultations given ; work accomplished, in progress, and contemplated. He enters fully into a consideration of the aims and methods adopted at the Laboratory. We hope that this Report will be widely circulated, as it cannot but be most helpful to those contemplating development of pathological work and scientific research.

The experience gained at the Laboratory of the Scottish Asylums is not of merely parochial importance. It has demonstrated that a practical scheme has been worked out at inconsiderable cost to the institutions. It has afforded a reasonably remunerative position to a physician engaged in research. It has given an impetus to scientific work, aid to scattered observers, and has already done much to remove the opprobrium of the loss of important material to psychological medicine. While fully recognising the pioneer work done at Wakefield and other large asylums, we cannot but commend this firmly established, amply justified institution as an example to other districts. The tedious and delicate processes of modern pathology require the uninterrupted attention of men skilled in observation and research. No doubt the greater asylums may and do command the services of competent pathologists, and provide them with the necessary apparatus ; but the smaller asylums should combine to obtain similar advantages. If the Lunacy Bill becomes law, and is not shorn of the recently introduced clause which will remove the only real difficulty, we shall expect to see several pathological laboratories founded in England at no distant date. We would fain hope that pathology will not be the only subject of study in these institutions, but that allied sciences will have equal attention. In a recent volume of this JOURNAL Dr. Van Gieson put forth an irresistible plea for this wider scope of research as the foundation of a newer psychiatry, and Dr. Ford Robertson endorses his arguments. It is, indeed, on such a foundation only that the art of healing can be perfected.