

the work which the Asylum has to do; how great a power of organization as well of scientific skill is needed in the man who has to look to all these things and to manage a large staff of inferior officers. All this goes for nothing with men whose one cry is that the thing might be done cheaper. So it doubtless might, if all that is needed were, after the good old fashion, to chain and beat our lunatics, to shut them up in cold and darkness and nakedness. The Guardians could doubtless get that done for a much smaller sum. Or they might doubtless even get the parish doctor, for a much smaller increase of his pay, to look in at the Asylum every day as he looks in at the workhouse. Or something might be saved by cutting down Asylum diet to the standard of workhouse diet, the difference between which two standards is shown by the simplest of tests; patients removed from the Asylum to the workhouse always lose in weight, while patients removed from the workhouse to the Asylum always gain. And there is one way perhaps better than any of these for lessening Asylum charges, and for taking away the need for enlarged Asylum buildings—a way which many a grumbling Guardian has in his own hands. No one cause sends so many patients to the Asylum as drunkenness; every Guardian who pays any part of his labourers' wages in drink instead of in money is directly helping to increase the number of Asylum patients, and thereby to increase the amount of Asylum charges and the size of Asylum buildings.

The upshot of all this is that, whatever changes may be coming in the form of the local government of our counties, the Lunatic Asylums, at all events, must not be handed over to bodies whose spirit and temper are at all like that of our present Boards of Guardians. They cannot be managed under the influence of that hard grudging spirit which forces every penny, either for the proper welfare of the inmates of the workhouse, or for the fair pay of its officers, to be absolutely wrung out of it. The way in which the Guardians manage the workhouses, the way in which their complaints show that they wish to manage the Asylums, is proof enough that they must never be allowed to have them in their hands. Under their care the proper medical treatment could never be carried out. No medical man of the class which alone is fit for the delicate work of Superintendent of an Asylum would either take such pay as they would offer him, or would submit to such interference as theirs. Whatever happens, our Lunatic Asylums must not be placed in the hands of men less liberal of money, less able to understand the position and feelings of an able scientific man, than they are now. Local management is no doubt best when fit local management can be had, but if the only form of local management that is to be had is such local management as is likely to be given us by Boards of Guardians or bodies at all like them, the care of our Asylums had better become a direct branch of the business of the central Government.—*Saturday Review*, May 10th.

THE LIMERICK DISTRICT HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE.

In our last issue it was mentioned that an investigation was then in progress conducted on oath by Dr. Nugent, the Senior Government Inspector in Ireland, respecting certain charges made at the instance of the Board of Government of the above institution in regard to its management, and more particularly in reference to the death of a male patient named Danford, in consequence, it was stated, of a cold plunge bath improperly administered to him. The result of that investigation was that by order of the Lord Lieutenant, under the advice of the Crown Counsel, an indictment for manslaughter was laid against the attendant who gave the bath in question. He was tried accordingly at the late Spring Assizes at Limerick, the trial ending in an acquittal. Subsequently the Lord Lieutenant addressed a communication to the Resident Medical Superintendent, Surgeon Robert Fitzgerald, in which, after recapitulating several matters of an unsatisfactory kind in the general conduct of the Home, he called upon him to resign. This he has since done, and, after a service of twenty-two years, has been awarded a superannuation pension of £220 per annum. On a review of the whole of these unfortunate proceedings it must be admitted that the course which has been pursued by the Lord Lieutenant was the only one possible that could have been

adopted; at the same time the Governors themselves cannot be held altogether blameless in the discharge of their duties, as the Lord Lieutenant has very plainly intimated to them. The very arduous and responsible post of the Medical Superintendent was certainly not lightened, but heavily weighted by their bearing, which, instead of being conciliatory and encouraging, was the very opposite, and only too well calculated to have a most depressing effect on any man of the least spirit or possessing the smallest particle of self respect. When a Board of Governors complain that no power is vested in their hands of "punishing" the head of a public institution with which they are connected it is saying quite enough to shew that there is something "rotten in the state of Denmark," and yet this is what has been done in a recently published communication of the Limerick Governors to the Lord Lieutenant. It is to be hoped, however, that the infliction of the treadmill or the "cat" will not be placed in the hands of these "punishment" Governors, who appear to be entirely forgetful of their own proper duties, and of the commonest respect towards a gentleman as well entitled to it as any one of themselves from his position and the important trust reposed in his hands. It is only further to be observed that the more than ordinarily trying and difficult task committed to Dr. Nugent in this most unpleasant and invidious matter was carried through by him in a manner highly to his credit in every point of view; he having a very hostile local party to contend with, and one only too well disposed to throw any difficulty in his way.

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Obituary.

DAVID SKAE, M.D.

Great Britain and France have each suffered the loss of one of their most distinguished alienists since our last number was published. Dr. Skae and M. Morel have long held a high place as physicians who, being both engaged in the active practical duties of their profession, not only did those with success, but also did much to advance our knowledge of insanity by their investigations and writings.

Dr. Skae was born in Edinburgh on the 5th July, 1814, and was educated by his uncle, the Rev. W. Lothian, in St. Andrews. He attended the art classes in that university for two years at the early age at which Scotch students of that time usually went to college. He was then for a short time a clerk in a lawyer's office in Edinburgh, and he used to say that it was there he acquired those orderly and business personal habits, and that clear handwriting that always distinguished him. He then studied medicine in Edinburgh, and settled in practice in partnership with Dr. Davidson in that city. In 1836 he became a Fellow of the College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, and began to lecture on Medical Jurisprudence in the Extra-Academical Medical School there in the session 1836-37. He delivered 14 courses of lectures on that subject, and had larger classes than any extra-academical lecturer on that subject had ever had before. He afterwards lectured on anatomy in conjunction with Drs. Handyside, Lonsdale, and Professor Spence. His colleagues during his career as a lecturer were men many of whom have since made enduring fame for themselves by their work in medical science. Dr. Knox, Sir J. Y. Simpson, Professors Hughes Bennett, John Reid, E. Forber, Goodsir, Henderson, Day, Geo. Wilson, Lizars, Miller, and Douglas MacLagan, Sir W. Ferguson, Drs. Argyll Robertson and Martin Barry formed a galaxy of medical talent enough to have given lustre to three or four medical schools. They were all then in the glory of their youth, eager to make new discoveries in medicine, eager for fame as teachers, and laying the foundation of that work which will carry their names down as benefactors to humanity and medicine. Skae was looked on by them as by no means the least brilliant or promising, and unquestionably he caught at that time the spirit of doing original work in medicine, which he earnestly inculcated on his assistants to the last. His attention was first directed to the subject of insanity in connection with mental and nervous physiology, and undoubtedly he approached it from a good point of view. As a medical jurist he had to acquire some practical acquaintance with it. Like his friend Sir James Simpson, he had to begin with an unsuccessful candidature for a parish doctor's place. He was surgeon to the Lock Hospital, and wrote several original papers on syphilis. In 1846 the Physician-Superintendency of Morningside Asylum fell vacant by the death of Dr. McKinnon. Dr. Skae became a candidate, and as the institution had been founded through the influence of members of the medical profession in Edinburgh, and it is laid down in its regula-