

The following is an excerpt from the Minutes of Meeting of the General Board of Lunacy, held at Edinburgh, on the 24th of May, 1870 :—

On the occasion of Dr. Browne's retirement it was resolved : "That the Board record their deep sense of the zeal, energy, and assiduity with which, during nearly thirteen years, Dr. Browne discharged the arduous and responsible duties of his office; and that the Secretary be instructed to convey to Dr. Browne an intimation of this resolution, with an expression of the great regret of the Board for the loss of his valuable and important services, and of their sympathy with him in the very sad misfortune which led to his resignation."

C. L. R.

The Good Old Times!

At the present time, when several deeply to be lamented abuses in asylums for the insane have come to light, and have produced something like a reaction in favour of the old *regime*, the following unpublished letter, written by the late Godfrey Higgins, Esq., may serve to prove that the moral tone of our asylums was *nearly* as low then as now! I would especially commend it to the attention of the past-admiring editor of the "Pall Mall Gazette."

The service rendered by Mr. Higgins to the cause of the insane is well known to most of your readers. Some years ago a MS. diary of his passed through the hands of a relative of mine, who made the following memorandum which I subjoin. I have in my possession a series of letters which passed between him and my late father, Samuel Tuke, of York, in reference to the abuses of the York asylum, from which I may at some future time make some extracts, illustrative of a very important period in the history of the amelioration of the condition of the insane in England, and, through England, of the world.

D. H. T.

Memorandum.

Godfrey Higgins, in his diary, states that he was in Paris, and visited Pinel. He was very politely received by him, and visited the asylum for French lunatics under his management, and was much pleased with it. He did not think there was anything to learn, except in the employment of the patients. He was rather suspicious that he did not see *the whole* of the establishment. He was convinced there were many persons

placed there who were not and never had been insane, but were placed there, and willing to remain, for the good food, beds, and clothing. The number of patients, 900.

G. H. was much struck in Paris with the comparative freedom from crime, and the appearance of order and civilisation. London, with a great deal of religion, and Paris, with very little—he thinks the former much the worst. He queries whether it is not owing to degrading superstition prevailing in the former. He thinks much harm is done by the prevailing confusion in England that religion and morality are the same thing—a conclusion he does not come to.

G. H. took great interest in the legislation on the subject of insanity, and corresponded with Sir George Rose (see letter) and others on bills introduced into Parliament by him and Mr. Thompson, M.P. for Hull.

Godfrey Higgins, Esq., to George Rose, Esq., M.P.
Skellow Grange, near Doncaster.

[No date. Probably April, 1814.]

Sir,—I take the liberty of sending you the copy of a letter to Earl Fitzwilliam, which I published some time ago, together with a pamphlet styled "Remarks," and the answer to it. They may perhaps be of use to you if you proceed with the parliamentary inquiry into the abuses of Asylums for Lunatics, according to the intention stated by you in one of the letters I had the honour to receive from you last summer. I beg leave to draw your attention to the prayer of my petition to the House of Lords respecting the appointment of Visitors from the Ridings as well as from the City, which will not be the case if your Bill pass as printed last year. I also beg leave to draw your attention to the anonymous extract from the *York Herald* relating to the books burnt, which I have posted into the last page but one of the letter, and on the truth of which you may rely.

I also request you to consider whether something might not be done for the protection of unfortunate females confined in places of this kind. They have often been got with child in the York Asylum, and it always has been justified by the officers of the house, under the pretence that it had been done advisedly for the benefit of the patient—that it was necessary for her recovery. Might not this be made a punishable offence, if done without the privity and consent of the parties sending a female to one of these places? I am well aware this may be put in a ridiculous point of view, but give me leave to ask whether an unfortunate female, sent by an overseer of the poor to such a place, is not entitled to some protection? I cannot think that this medicine ought to be given without the consent of the friends of the patient; besides, I beg leave to observe that, as the law now

stands, no female patient is safe, whether the medicine be required or not. E. W., a young woman of irreproachable character, both before and since her insanity, was sent to the York Asylum by the overseers of Louth, in Lincolnshire. She was there got with child by the head keeper. The justices of Lincolnshire permitted her to filiate the child, and they adjudged the head keeper to be the father. They apprehended him by a warrant, and he paid the sum of £30 for the maintenance of the child. Some time afterwards the keeper left the Asylum and set up a house of his own, and upon that occasion the Governors of the York Asylum made him a present of a piece of plate, as a reward for his services, with an appropriate inscription upon it. This case has not been laid before the public out of delicacy to the female, who now lives as servant in a very respectable gentleman's family in Lincolnshire.

I remain, Sir, &c.,
GODFREY HIGGINS.

The Broken Ribs in the Hanwell and Carmarthen Asylums.

THE Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy made upon the cases of *Santi Nistri*, a patient in Hanwell Asylum, and *Rees Price*, in the Carmarthen Asylum, who recently died from broken ribs and other injuries, has been printed by order of the House of Commons. With regard to the first-named patient, the Commissioners "are sorry to report that they have failed in obtaining any precise information of how or when the poor man received the injuries of which he died, but our inquiry has served to show various defects in the management of the Hanwell Asylum." The patient died on the 11th of October; the Commissioners' visit and inquiry took place on the 5th of November. No wonder that they were unable to gain any information, and that "they could place no confidence in the statements of the patients, some of whom impressed us with the idea that they had been tutored." We believe that the only chance of arriving at the true history of these cases is to institute an inquiry as soon as they occur, an inquiry which, from their experience, the Commissioners in Lunacy would be able to carry out much more effectually than the Coroner, who can only take the evidence which is offered to him. The Report reiterates the Commissioners' complaint of the insufficiency of the medical staff. The Committee of the Asylum, however, in an appended communication, decline to appoint a second medical officer. The Commissioners also recommend an increase in