

deliberation, for their labours have been protracted and arduous, and the results must stand for the guidance of psychiatry for many years to come.

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*The Management of the London County Council Asylums and the Horton Asylum Scandal.*

The history of asylum management in England yields no example of so scathing a condemnation as that passed by the jury and judge in what has attained such widespread notoriety as the Horton Asylum scandal.

Four employés of this asylum were indicted at Guildford, on July 19th last, for conspiring to steal the property of the asylum, the jury<sup>(1)</sup> finding them guilty and expressing the opinion that the Horton Asylum "had been grossly mis-managed," and "that the conduct of those responsible for the administration ought to be seriously inquired into." The judge in passing sentence is reported to have said that the gross mismanagement of the asylum enabled him to take "a lenient view of the conduct of the prisoners." "There was no proper control or supervision in the asylum."

The judge is further reported to have remarked that the statement of a witness, that there were twenty-six persons included in the malversations, "was possibly true," and added that "it might be that the whole management of the asylum was criminal from top to bottom."

The evidence of mismanagement elicited at the trial must have been most convincing for so careful a judge as Justice Darling to express so damaging an opinion of the state of the asylum, and of this having been brought about by the system of control of the London County Council. The judge's allusion to leniency in sentence certainly points to his regarding the management, however innocent in intent, as more or less causative of the crime.

The plea of one prisoner probably had considerable weight with the judge. This man stated that "they never liked to have a lot of over-stock, and that it was usual to get rid of the over-stock"; that "he had seen barrels of limejuice and vinegar poured into the drains," and "a ton of granular sugar

melted down in that way"; that "seeing such a waste, he thought there was no harm in taking some of the things for himself."

These statements must, of course, be received with caution, but it is doubtful whether they are absolute moonshine, as the counsel for the prosecution suggested, and they evidently were not so regarded by the judge.

It is to be regretted that inquiry was not made in regard to the reasons for the objection to over-stock. It has been suggested that this was due to the fact that the supplies of the various asylums being estimated beforehand to the central authority, any erroneous estimate entailed so much unpleasantness with the central authority, that this was the reason for the destruction of the surplus. It would be of interest to know if this is the true explanation.

The judge also commented on the fact that the man in responsible charge received only £200 per annum, but it must be remembered that in ordinary county asylums this is not an especially low salary; in these asylums, however, the store-keeper, etc., are under the direct supervision and control of the medical superintendent. It does not appear that the medical superintendent had any real power or authority to supervise the persons in charge of the stores, etc. This, if a fact, would be conclusive evidence of one great difference which exists between the management of London asylums and that of the ordinary county asylum.

The principle of government in which the London County Asylums appear to differ from similar asylums in England and Scotland is that the Committee of Management endeavour to exercise both legislative and executive functions, with the result that the former is very much in excess and the latter extremely defective.

Retaining the executive responsibility in their own hands, it becomes necessary to pass a rule to meet every possible contingency that may arise in the absence of an ever-present responsible executive. Rules and restrictions are consequently multiplied *ad infinitum*, so that the officials are swathed in red tape—and this in institutions which demand the utmost flexibility and adaptability. One of the most striking examples of this condition is the fact that the authorities cannot even trust their medical superintendents, men of high repute and

of untarnished honour, to perform their duties honestly. These gentlemen cannot be trusted to leave the institution for an hour or two when they feel they can safely do so. Their going out and coming in is carefully noted by a gate porter; and however much time may be given to the work of the institution at a period of stress, no corresponding relaxation can be taken in lighter times without an irritating exposure to official comment. By such a rule the irksomeness of asylum residence to the higher officials is enormously increased and their standing lowered in the eyes of their subordinates. That such conditions of existence are endured is a perennial source of wonderment to our American, Continental, and Scottish confrères.

This system of substituting fixed rules in place of the discretion and judgment of an experienced superintendent is necessary in order to make the authority of the committee clearly pre-eminent.

This system of government tends to reduce these asylums from the rank of hospitals to mere places of detention, and if persisted in and carried out to its logical conclusion would make them mere manufactories of chronic insanity. Such a result of an inordinate desire to exercise authority would justify Lord Salisbury's description of the London County Council as a young person possessing an enormous appetite and a bad digestion.

In most English county asylums and in the corresponding Scottish institutions the executive functions are carefully left in the hands of the superintendent, and everything is done to increase the respect and authority he wields, on which so much of the usefulness of the institution as a place for treatment depends. It is recognised that this object, the cure of the patients, is much more important than the aggrandizement of a committee. It is recognised clearly that everything occurring in an asylum may directly or indirectly affect the inmates and consequently should be within the purview of the superintendent. This does not necessitate that the superintendent should continually supervise the reception of stores, etc., but it gives him the right to inquire if anything prejudicial to the inmates comes under his observation or is brought to his notice and enables him to co-ordinate all the various activities of the asylum for the good of the patients. Observation,

alertness, and initiative are thus cultivated. In the London County Council asylums, on the contrary, although the superintendent is nominally the head of the institution, in practice his power, and especially his influence, are greatly limited, and the tendency of the present system of government is to leave little or nothing to his discretion or initiative.

This usurpation of executive authority inevitably tends to become more flagrant; but since the committees meet only fortnightly, it becomes necessary to delegate their executive powers in the intervals to some other authority. The executive power thus gravitates into the hands of a permanent official, the Clerk to the Visitors, who, in course of time, will probably govern both the asylums and the committees. This official, whose office is barely mentioned in the Lunacy Act, and who possesses the most limited functions in the county asylums, is thus coming to play a most extraordinary part under the L.C.C. system of government, and the usurped executive authority would appear to be undergoing a second usurpation.

The limitation of the executive is illustrated in the most striking manner by the way in which the influence of the medical superintendent over the attendants is weakened or destroyed. The qualities of the attendants are among the most important therapeutical agencies of the asylum, yet inquiry would probably show that the medical superintendents have little voice in their selection, reward or punishment. It would probably be found that the relation of these officials to their superintendent is very much that which might be expected in a ship of war in which the maintenance of discipline was not primarily vested in the captain but in a dockyard board.

A committee is, of course, satisfied if the letter of its rules is carried out, and fails to recognise that the spirit of sympathy, kindness, and consideration for the inmates is a far more important matter, and that the individuals who possess or exercise these qualities are more likely to be recognised by a specialist than by a sub-committee of lay persons.

An attendant, who has only to obey the letter of the rules of the asylum, may be so passively unkind, unsympathetic, and irritating to his helpless charges as to be absolutely injurious, and yet may be successively promoted to posts in which he is more and more pernicious. This, however, is the class of

attendant who is most likely to succeed in an institution in which the spirit of duty is ignored and only the letter of the rules enforced.

In the ordinary county asylums the storekeeper, the steward, the clerk, the engineer, and the matron are directly subordinate to the medical superintendent, but in the London County Council asylums they are practically independent officials, the result being that in an ordinary asylum any small current emergency or difficulty is at once settled by the superintendent, whilst in the London County Council asylums it has to be postponed to the meeting of the committee. In the latter case small frictions between the officials which might have been settled speedily and forgotten, by postponement grow into serious matters of irritation and disagreement, keeping the asylum officials in a state of continuous annoyance and "worry." If the matter is urgent, it is probable that the parties concerned would appeal before the meeting of the committee to the *deus ex machina* of the central authority, knowing that very much of the decision of the dispute depends upon the view he takes and the manner in which he presents it to the committee. Naturally this officer would be inclined to favour the officials who most fully recognise his encroaching authority and to differ from those who would venture to oppose it. The principle of the central authority would be *divide et impera*, and squabbles and differences among the asylum officials would be welcome as making the central authority more necessary. The result would be that instead of amity, goodwill, and kindness being encouraged in the asylums and reflected by the officials on the inmates, malice, envy, and all uncharitableness would tend to predominate.

Under such conditions an institution, however vast, with its millions of bricks and miles of corridors, would approximate to an inferno, and the good intentions of the governing body would not even be as useful as they are reported to be in its prototype.

The London County Council, as this Journal has often recognised, has acted in regard to the insane with great liberality and with the best of intentions. We have every reason to hope that if there has been failure to secure good results, it will do its best to remedy the defects when once they are demonstrated. In this article there is no wish to do more

than to point out the fact that the London County Council has inherited, and perhaps exaggerated, an erroneous principle of government, which is tending to produce results that are infinitely more disastrous than the Horton scandal or even the Colney Hatch holocaust.

The question that the London County Council has to consider is whether it will continue to gather the executive power in its own hands or trust it to its medical superintendents; whether it wishes its asylums to be governed on the highest principles of science and human kindness, administered and co-ordinated by highly skilled specialists, or to be controlled by a non-resident official, who knows nothing of an asylum beyond the dry bones of its rules; whether it wishes its institutions to be like musical instruments played by the turning of a handle, becoming with increasing age more and more obnoxious, or to resemble magnificent organs, operated by highly skilled musicians with the most harmonious results.

A change must be made sooner or later, since the logic of events is proving to demonstration that the present system of government of the London County Asylums, as contrasted with all others, may be briefly summed up as the apotheosis of *how not to do it*.

(<sup>1</sup>) See newspaper report, "Notes and News," p. 814.

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## Part II.—Reviews.

*Die Perioden des Menschlichen Organismus in ihrer psychologischen und biologischen Bedeutung* [*The Periodicity of the Human Organism and its psychological and biological significance*]. By Dr. HERMANN SWOBODA. Leipzig and Vienna: Deuticke, 1904. Pp. 135, 8vo.

During recent years a considerable amount of attention has been paid to the periodic and cyclic manifestations of human physiologic processes. The impetus was probably furnished by the discovery that menstruation is in reality a wave that exerts an influence over the processes of the body during the whole month. Perry-Coste's daily observations of pulse rapidity through many years served to show that in men there are weekly, yearly, and perhaps monthly curves in the