HOLLAND.

By Dr. F. M. COWAN.

Asylums are not popular institutions. In this respect circumstances in Holland are what they undoubtedly are in almost every other country. The public firmly believes that strange and weird things go on within the asylum walls, and is ever inclined to believe accusations by some discharged inmate. A medical student wrote a paper in which he uttered the very worst complaints about his illegal confinement in one of our asylums, and in a very short time a cry was raised that such things were shameful, and should be stopped. Newspapers eagerly spread the news, and, of course, the medical superintendent came in for the greater part of the scolding. The position of the asylum physician is a very difficult one in such circumstances; very often his medical oath forbids him to speak, and then there is the dislike to enter into discussion with opponents who are decided not to be convinced.

The question arose in the Psychological Association what measures could be taken to prevent the occurrence of such disagreeable events. Dr. van Deventer wrote a paper, in which he proposed that a Board should be formed which should examine such questions and report upon them. The scheme, superficially, seems a good one, only who are to form the Board? If it is to be a body of alienists, it may be feared that outsiders will consider the opinion a partial one, and no good will be done. No doubt it is hard to endure the unjust accusations of people unfit to judge, but then what cannot be cured must be endured.

Want of accommodation is still the chronic evil. No sooner is a new wing added to an already existing asylum or is a new asylum built than it gets filled in a very short time, and applications have to be refused. Plans have been made for new asylums, one for Amsterdam and one for Rotterdam. As a matter of course the founding of a colony is thought of and discussed. There is no doubt that a colony would have the advantage of disburdening the asylums of a large number of incurables, and if properly managed even curable patients might advantageously be treated in a boarding-house; still, even ardent advocates will acknowledge that the system has serious disadvantages. As it is, we have one colony on a very small scale, and only for women. It exists in the small town of Grave. The asylum at Grave is a small one, and only quiet patients are taken; there is no such thing as a refractory ward. It is very interesting to hear how the medical superintendent made the citizens accustomed to the presence of lunatics, and how he encouraged them to take such patients as boarders. Dr. Vos tells us that he made a number of his patients take walks in the town, accompanied by only one or two nurses; then several of them were allowed to go out alone. Dr. Vos had taken the precaution to provide one of them with a ticket, in which it was mentioned that they had obtained furlough, so as to prevent any ill-timed interference. Tradesmen and other people having business at the asylum had to reach the building through the airing-court; the consequence was that the inhabitants of Grave were rather disappointed to perceive that, to quote the handbook of Bucknill and Tuke, "the

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asylum inmates were as grave as a Vestry Meeting." When a year had elapsed an advertisement was inserted in the local paper inviting people to take patients as boarders and to apply at the asylum. The system works very well; but there is the Lunacy Law, which proves an obstacle.

The law regulates the stay of lunatics in an asylum, but does not mention the case of paupers staying in a boarding-house: the different municipalities consequently refuse to pay the boarding expenses unless their patients are received in a regular asylum. Our Home Office consequently wishes to introduce a supplementary article. Some of the clauses proposed decided the Psychological Association to send an address to the Chamber with the view to obtain a few changes in the matter proposed. Government proposes that the Board of Governors shall decide who is to be boarded out and who is not; the Association considers that this is an encroachment on the duties of the physician; indeed, it seems strange that such an absurd measure should be taken. Experience shows that whenever a man has been an asylum governor for a few months he considers himself a competent alienist; and it is to be feared that these worthies, jealous of their authority, will select the patients themselves and turn a deaf ear to the opinion of the physician. Another argument, adduced by the minister, was that, at the moment, our asylums contained a large number of old people who should not be asylum inmates, because they were only kept there on account of feeble-mindedness, a consequence of their age, but who might advantageously be cared for in a private house. To this the Association answered that it was a mistake to think that our asylums were considered as alms-houses by the physicians; that the experiment had been tried in several cases of sending home such patients as seemed to be fit for this; and that the experiment had proved a failure in many cases; that several of these harmless people, when at home again, turned out to be unruly and to have foul habits; that the selection of lunatics for boarders was very often a very difficult matter requiring a thorough acquaintance with the case. As I mentioned, the system which is now carried out at Grave is counteracted by the existing law; not only do municipalities refuse to defray the expenses of boarded patients, but such boarders are to leave the asylum on furlough, and when the legal term for their stay is past it is either necessary to make them return to the asylum for some time or they have to be discharged as "not recovered." In the latter case the asylum doctor loses all control, and his regular visits may be refused; besides, in the case of a relapse all the formalities required by the law have to be gone through anew. As Dr. Vos writes, no difficulties have as yet arisen. One of the practitioners at Grave has been found willing to give a certificate, empowering the justice of the peace to give his authorisation to receive the patient into the asylum; but precious time may be lost in this way, and it is desirable that the term may be lengthened without those superfluous formalities.

Another *question brûlante* is the nursing staff, especially the male part. There is no doubt that women have a certain tact not often met with in men of attending to and caring for sick and diseased; still, in some of the asylum wards it is impossible to do without male attendants. It cannot be denied that the authorities have done a great deal for

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nurses and next to nothing for the men. That the pay of the male attendants is higher than that of the nurses is the necessary consequence of the law of demand and supply. Fortunately, the minister has passed a resolution for the reorganization of the personnel in the Government asylum at Medomblik. It is ordered that there shall be four degrees *viz.* applicants, assistants, nurses, and head nurses. Persons applying shall not be under 18 nor above 35 years, they shall first be medically examined by one of the physicians, they shall fill up a form of questions, and inquiries shall be made as to conduct, etc., of the applicant. When appointed they shall pass an examination within a year and a half, but not until four months after admission. It comprises reading, writing, grammar, arithmetic, the elements of the nursing of the insane; women have to prove their acquaintance with needlework. The examination is held twice a year (in March and in September). The examination for attendant or nurse is divided into two parts. It is required that the first part shall be passed within a year and a half after their appointment; the minimum of time is to be eleven months of service in the lower rank. This first part comprises history, geography, an elementary knowledge of human anatomy, and physiology. Within two years the second part must be passed—nursing, an acquaintance with the symptoms of insanity, care for the insane; women shall show some proficiency in the cooking for the sick.

After passing this examination successfully they are appointed nurse; they obtain a diploma and receive a badge.

A schoolmaster is attached to the Medomblik asylum. His duties are to teach the idiots (a few hours a week) and to give lessons to the applicants and assistants.

The salaries are as follows:

	Men.	Women.
Applicants . . .	F.180 (£15)	F.120 (£10)
Assistants having passed the first part of exam. .	F.240 (£20)	F.180 (£15)
Assistants before passing .	F.200 (£16 15s.)	F.150 (£12 10s.)
Attendants (single) . .	F.230 (£23 6s.)	
„ (married) .	F.550 (£25 10s.)	
Head-attendants (single) .	F.400 (£33 10s.)	
„ (married)	F.650 (£54 4s.)	

Attendants may rise to a pay of F.355 (£30) per annum, and if married to F.750 (£62 10s.); head-attendants may rise to F.500 (£41), if single, and to F.850 (£70 16s.) if married. An attendant may be pensioned on account of infirmity after ten years' duty, and such a pension may reach an amount of F.700 (£58 6s.).

It is hoped that an improvement in the social status of attendants will greatly improve the standard.

ITALY.

By Dr. G. C. Ferrari.

The year 1904 will always be a memorable one in the history of Italian psychiatry. February 14th saw the promulgation of the new

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