ASYLUM WORKERS' ASSOCIATION.

The Annual Meeting of this Association was held on May 14th. Sir James Crichton-Browne presided, and delivered an eloquent and sympathetic address, which dealt fully with the aims and activities of the Association.

A detailed report of the year's work was presented to the meeting; appended is an abstract of this Report:

"The roll of Members has increased from 2890 in December, 1898, to 3006 at the end of 1899, this number including 61 life members and 37 associate members; 1010 new members were elected during 1899; and had all old subscriptions been renewed, the Association would by this time approach 4000.

"Representatives of thirty-one Asylums (in England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and the Colonies) not previously represented, had joined the Association during 1899; and recently members had been elected from the Royal Edinburgh and Royal Glasgow Asylums. Reservists on active service had been retained on the roll without payment of subscription for the present year.

"The Financial Statement shows that the aggregate receipts for 1899 amounted to £256 10*s.*, as compared with £254 7*s.* 9*d.* during 1898. The advance in receipts would have been larger but that the collecting cards for Home of Rest Fund brought in only £26 1*s.*, as compared with £61 19*s.* 6*d.* in 1898. The credit balance at end of 1899 amounted to £143 2*s.* 4*d.*, against £137 14*s.* 3*d.* at end of 1898.

"Nine cases had received grants from the Home of Rest Fund, which was assuming much of the character of a mutual benefit society, being mainly supported by Asylum Workers themselves, though contributions from others were welcome.

"Impending lunacy legislation had engaged the anxious attention of the Executive, and every effort had been made to obtain the introduction of a clause providing for assured pensions for Asylum Workers.

"The Association is to be congratulated on the willingness of Sir James Crichton-Browne, M.D., F.R.S., to undertake for a third year the office of President.

"The Executive Committee desire to place on record their keen appreciation of the continued services of the Honorary Secretary, Dr. Shuttleworth, to whom the growth of the Association is largely due, and of the valuable aid of Mr. J. B. W. Wilson as Assistant Secretary."

PARLIAMENTARY NEWS.

LUNACY LABORATORIES.—*29th March.*

In reply to Sir J. A. Pease, Sir MATTHEW WHITE RIDLEY said that he had no information to lead him to believe that the research for which the laboratories might be established would involve necessity for licences or certificates. He promised to consult the Lunacy Commissioners on the subject.

RATING OF INSTITUTIONS FOR IMBECILES.—*2nd May.*

On a Bill being introduced to exempt from poor and other local rates all registered institutions for the care of idiots and imbeciles, Mr. T. W. RUSSELL said that it would be necessary to have an inquiry by a Select Committee before arriving at a conclusion. In the inquiry hospitals would be included. The Bill was withdrawn.

MEDICAL OFFICERS AND THE CERTIFICATION OF LUNATICS.—*5th April.*

Sir MANCHERJEE BHOWNAGGREE asked the President of the Local Government Board whether he received from the Bethnal Green Board of Guardians a communication to the effect that gratuities had been paid on a large scale to relieving officers by medical officers in respect of the certification of lunatics, as well as by certain metropolitan licensed houses; and whether he intended taking any steps to prevent a repetition of such practices.

Mr. CHAPLIN replied: The facts are as stated in the question. I have communicated with the Lunacy Commissioners, and I find that they have cautioned the

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proprietors of metropolitan licensed houses that wherever the practice of giving relieving officers gratuities of the kind referred to has obtained it must be at once discontinued, and the Commissioners have no reason to doubt that their requirement will be respected. They have also communicated their views to the Wiltshire Justices, as one of the licensed houses affected was licensed by those Justices. As regards the officers of the Guardians, I have directed that an inquiry shall be held by an Inspector of the Local Government Board. The inquiry will take place as soon as possible, and on receipt of his report I shall have to decide what further steps, if any, it will be necessary for me to take in the matter.

Sir MANCHERJEE BHOWNAGGREE: In view of the facts now disclosed, will the Home Secretary insert adequate provisions in the Lunacy Bill so as effectually to check this practice?

Mr. CHAPLIN: I will consult the Home Secretary on the matter.

POST-MORTEM EXAMINATIONS.—*11th May.*

The Lunacy Commission came under discussion on the Estimates, and complaint was made of the low percentage of post-mortem examinations in the criminal lunatic asylum.

[If Broadmoor were specially referred to, the complaint would appear to have been ill-founded.—ED.]

The system of boarding-out criminal lunatics in ordinary borough and county asylums was also criticised as undesirable in the interests of these institutions, but it is a necessity until more State accommodation is provided.

ROYAL LUNATIC ASYLUMS.—*17th March.*

Mr. WEIR asked the Lord Advocate whether the Secretary for Scotland had received memorials from certain parish councils in Scotland urging that parish councils should be represented on the Board of Royal Lunatic Asylums, and that there should be a public audit of the accounts of those boards; and what action was proposed in the matter?

The LORD ADVOCATE: The memorials were received, and the Secretary for Scotland met a deputation, when the whole subject was discussed. To give effect to the proposals would require legislation, which it is not intended to propose at present.

LUNACY COMMISSIONERS.

Mr. WEIR asked the Lord Advocate if his attention had been called to the recommendation contained in the Forty-first Annual Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy for Scotland to the effect that measures should be taken to give district lunacy boards permissive powers to provide accommodation for the poorer class of private patients; and what action it was proposed to take?

The LORD ADVOCATE: The answer to the first part of the question is in the affirmative. The Secretary for Scotland does not propose to take any action at present.

LUNACY BOARD (SCOTLAND) BILL.—*19th February.*

The LORD ADVOCATE introduced a Bill to make further provision for the number and salaries of the staff of the Lunacy Board for Scotland, and for the remuneration of certain of the Commissioners.

9th March.

The LORD ADVOCATE said that this was a purely formal Treasury Bill. Unfortunately the salary of the Secretary of the Scottish General Board of Lunacy was fixed by statute, and there was a provision that only one clerk should be appointed. With the increase of lunacy in Scotland temporary clerks had been employed under the sanction of the Treasury. But an excellent official was being retained at a much less salary than that to which he was entitled. The present Bill was to put the staffing of the office on the ordinary footing, the Treasury fixing the salaries in the ordinary way, and to allow certain payments to the unofficial Commissioners and an increased payment to the Secretary. The matter had been arranged between the Treasury and the Scottish Office.

Objections were raised by several members and information was asked as to the duties of the Board, etc.

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2nd April.

The LORD ADVOCATE, in moving the second reading of the Bill, said he should have thought that the Bill might well have been allowed to pass without much discussion, in the belief that the Treasury would not readily lend themselves to a contribution of Imperial money unless they felt that the demand could not be controverted. But owing to the remarks that had been made he felt it necessary to go into details as to the history of the Board and the increase of the work imposed upon them. Proceeding, he said that in 1858 there were in asylums 4020 patients, and in private dwellings 1804; and in 1898 there were 12,139 and 2767 respectively. Moreover, not only were the Medical Commissioners bound by statute to inspect every asylum twice a year, and there were 7 royal, 15 district, and 5 private asylums, but it was their practice in the course of every visit to make a personal domiciliary visit to every single patient. That meant over 29,000 visits a year. The Deputy Commissioners visited every patient who was boarded out in private houses, and had for this purpose to travel over the length and breadth of Scotland. Their visits in 1858 were 753, and in 1898, 3690. These visits occupied the whole time of the Deputy Commissioners. It was physically impossible for them to do more work. In the present circumstances it was absolutely necessary to have more medical time, and the question was how to get it. They could appoint another Medical Commissioner, but that would mean another salary of not less than £1000 a year, and it would also be open to the objection that the professional element would preponderate over the lay element—the Chairman and two legal members.

After consultation with the General Lunacy Board, LORD BALFOUR thought that by a re-arrangement of the duties of the office more medical time could be obtained from the Commissioners as at present constituted if they could be relieved of certain administrative work. The Chairman had not been idle; not only did he attend the regular board meetings, but he frequently was at the office at other times. He had to see prospective sites for asylums and investigate plans for buildings, etc. The legal members had given excellent attendance at the board meetings, and if the Medical Commissioners were to be more and more taken away, the Secretary would require someone to advise him. So far as the Secretary for Scotland was concerned, it would be the same to him whether they appointed an extra commissioner or utilised the Medical Commissioners in entirely medical work and took a proportion of the time of the unpaid Commissioners. This would entail a certain amount of remuneration. The provision in the Bill was that a sum might be paid by the Treasury to the three unpaid Commissioners, provided that in any year it did not amount to more than £500. He put this Bill as a necessary measure before the House—necessary if they were to have a proper working of a very useful and efficient department.

Mr. CALDWELL said there should be no difficulty in getting a Commissioner who would perform the duty unpaid, and it had not been proved that they should offer inducements to men to fill this office.

Sir J. STIRLING MAXWELL would not vote for the Bill. Officials holding important posts should either be paid or unpaid, but the Bill proposed to create officials who would be neither one kind nor the other. If there was strong ground for creating another paid post in the Department, he should have gladly voted the necessary amount for that purpose; but the present proposal seemed to him to be giving the sum of £500 where it was not wanted, and for which the country was not likely to get any adequate return.

Sir T. GIBSON CARMICHAEL, a former Chairman of the Lunacy Board, said he thought that the present Secretary of the Board discharged his duties most efficiently, but the clerical staff were very much over-burdened with work. If they agreed to the first clause of the Bill he thought they would be doing a good thing for Scotland. But why should the benefits of that clause be confined to the Secretary and clerks? There were other officials of the Board; there were the paid Commissioners and the Deputy Commissioners, and he believed their work had increased quite as much as the others. The legal members of the Board were extremely useful, and gave the Board advice upon technical matters which he could not have given to the medical members. If the Lord Advocate assured him legal members were not willing to discharge these duties on the Board without being paid, then he must agree to the proposal. He was going to vote for the second

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reading, but he did not feel convinced that the Chairman ought to be paid. He hoped the Government would not press for a salary for the Chairman of the Board.

Mr. RENSHAW regarded it as an unfortunate feature of the proposals of the Bill; for it for the first time proposed the partial payment of those who were connected with public offices in Scotland. It seemed to him that what was most needed was the appointment of another Assistant Commissioner, or they might get rid of one of the two legal advisers.

Other members having given utterance to similar objections, CAPTAIN SINCLAIR paid a tribute to the admirable administration of the Scottish Lunacy Board. He said that the salaries were limited by a statute, dating so far back as 1864. The English statute did not limit the salaries, and he maintained that the Government should pay the Scottish Commissioners well, and no one could contend that at present they were sufficiently paid.

The LORD ADVOCATE said he was sure he was not doing too much in saying that he would take upon himself to bring to the notice of Lord Balfour the views that had been expressed upon matters of principle. They were perfectly willing to consider them, and he could promise the House that in the light of the remarks which had been made his noble friend and himself would consider the circumstances, and whether it might or might not be more prudent to provide for the extra assistance in another way. On that understanding he hoped the House would allow the Bill to be now read a second time.

Mr. CALDWELL thereupon withdrew his amendment, and the motion for the second reading of the Bill was agreed to.

EDINBURGH DISTRICT LUNACY BOARD.—10*th May*.

On the motion for the second reading of this Bill, Mr. URE moved its rejection, urging that it was of an unprecedented character. The statutory powers of the Lunacy Board had nothing whatever to do with constructing and maintaining a railway, with selling water as a water company, and with the work of a sewage contractor. He opposed the Bill, not only on general grounds, but in the interests of the town of Bathgate, which, with its small rateable value and limited water supply, had a claim on a portion of the large catchment area the Lunacy Board proposed to acquire.

Mr. JONATHAN SAMUEL seconded the amendment.

Sir LEWIS M'IVER said he hoped that the Hon. Member for Linlithgowshire was now prepared to allow the House to go on with the business before it. Bathgate had arrived at the decision to drop opposition to this Bill. It would be a grave departure from Parliamentary traditions to oppose on the second reading a Bill which had passed a Committee of the House of Lords, and to refuse it the courtesy of a hearing by a Committee in that House.

Mr. URE, by leave, withdrew his amendment, and the Bill was read a second time.

RECENT MEDICO-LEGAL CASES.

REPORTED BY DR. MERCIER.

[The editors request that members will oblige by sending full newspaper reports of all cases of interest as published by the local press at the time of the assizes.]

Eady v. *Elsdon*.

The plaintiff was a schoolmaster, who brought an action against a schoolboy to recover damages for having wilfully set fire to the plaintiff's school and destroyed his furniture. The defendant denied liability, and pleaded that if he did the act complained of he was temporarily insane; and further, that the plaintiff voluntarily took him as a pupil, knowing that he was mentally affected, and failed to exercise proper discipline and control. The plaintiff advertised for boys who were idle, disobedient, or difficult to manage, and it was as a pupil of this description that the defendant was placed with him. It was alleged that the defendant had previously set fire to another school, and his mother stated that he needed constant watching and flogging, and could not be restrained. He had repeatedly

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