for five years was attacked with lethargic sleep, for periods lasting from eight to ten days; and of which one lasted even seventeen days. The patient during this period had no excretions. She took food only when awake. Another case, not less conscientiously observed, is that published by M. Dionis, surgeon to the Dauphiness. Elizabeth Devigne, aged 25, living with her mother in the Faubourg-Saint-Germain, was attacked on May 26, 1709, with an extraordinary malady, which was looked upon as catalepsy. . . . The physicians who came to see the patient went away convinced that there was no imposture; but no one was able to formulate a plausible theory. . . . The Lieutenant-General of Police had her placed in one of the religious hospitals, where she was placed under the care of Drs. Ombert, Morian, and Geoffroy. They found that in the hospital, under their eyes, the patient had the same attacks of catalepsy. Ultimately, the patient greatly improved.—[EDS.]

## OCCASIONAL NOTES OF THE QUARTER.

### *Lunacy Acts Amendment Bill.*

The Medico-Psychological Association has not been idle in considering the clauses of this oft-introduced Bill, and in bringing its defects and actually mischievous enactments under the notice of the Lord Chancellor. The Parliamentary Committee has repeatedly met, and it has stated the grounds of objection in the form of a circular. It was thought only fair to the members of the Association, and likely to be productive of benefit to the Committee itself, to submit this statement to the quarterly meeting of the Association. As will be seen from the report of this meeting under "Notes and News," the result was a lively and practical debate on the Bill. Experienced men in and out of asylums agreed in regretting the troublesome interference with the prompt admission of private patients into institutions for the insane. A curious omission in the clause referring to urgency certificates was pointed out by the Chairman, in his appropriate opening remarks.

Strong protests were made against the worse than useless checks put upon the care and treatment of single patients. That they should be visited only once a year is, no doubt, a great defect; but we fail to understand why the Bill should rush from this extreme of neglect to that of so great an interference with the system that it would become practically unavailable, much to the detriment of the

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patients, who will be driven by this Bill, should it become law, into out-of-the-way nooks and corners of England, or expatriated to Belgium or France, or no one knows where. Dr. Ringrose Atkins forcibly pointed out the absurdity and inconvenience of excluding medical men on committees of registered hospitals from signing the certificates of patients should they happen to be admitted into those institutions. Indeed, the more the Bill is looked at in the light of this and some other causes, the more it shows the want of practical acquaintance with lunacy among those who have been engaged in drawing up this elaborate Bill. One of our judges once made the pertinent and sarcastic remark that it might be supposed from the character of some of our Lunacy Acts that they had been drafted by lunatics themselves!

Dr. Murray Lindsay, than whom no one is better informed on the question of pensions, brought out the main points, upon which he has always insisted. The difficulty, however, remains as to the scale upon which pensions should be reckoned, it being felt by some that if the present rate of a maximum of two-thirds of the salary and emoluments could be depended upon as certain, it would be undesirable to propose any change beyond (1) the addition of seven years to the term of service, (2) the inclusion of the previous service of a superintendent in another county, should such be the fact, and (3) the right of appeal to the Home Secretary if there should be a disagreement between committees of asylums or Quarter Sessions on the one hand, and superintendents on the other, in regard to the amount of pension.

Much may be done by the influence brought to bear upon Members of Parliament by the members of this Association. We hope that now the definite points of objection to the Bill have been clearly put forward by the Association, no legitimate means will be omitted in exercising this influence in bringing about amendments in Committee in the House of Commons.

Some of the objections to the Bill are so well stated by Dr. Needham, in his recent Annual Report, that we cannot do better than add them to the foregoing remarks:—

> As the same, or a slightly altered, Bill will probably be again introduced, I venture to draw attention to two clauses especially, which appear to be in a high degree objectionable, seeing that they have reference to institutions such as this, which were established by voluntary effort for philanthropic purposes, the whole of whose resources

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are devoted to the comfort and recovery of the patients, and which are managed by Committees of independent gentlemen, such as form the Committees of County Asylums, who derive no pecuniary or other benefit from their connection with them.

Clause 8, sub-section 3, provides that no person shall be received as a lunatic in a hospital under an order on the application of a member of the Managing Committee of the Hospital. This provision seems both unnecessary and unfair to those who, associated with these institutions solely for philanthropic purposes, devote much time and trouble to their management, and who, approving of their constitution, and having an intimate knowledge of their character and arrangements, would naturally be desirous of selecting them, in case of need, in preference to other classes of asylums in whose constitution they might not have so much confidence.*

Clause 53, in its present form, is considered to be peculiarly objectionable.

While admitting the propriety of some provision whereby the Commissioners in Lunacy can enforce compliance with their reasonable requirements, there is probably no precedent for such extensive powers, practically without appeal, being given by an Act of Parliament to any department over large public institutions which, for many years, have been fulfilling a great public requirement, and which, as the reports of the Commissioners in Lunacy bear witness, have been conducted with efficiency and success.

It must also be noticed that, in this clause especially, a responsibility, under severe penalties, is thrown upon the Superintendent of the Hospital, which he, as the paid servant of the Committee, could have no possible power of discharging except by their permission. The objectionable character of this clause would be greatly diminished if it were so varied as to give power to the Secretary of State to take independent action against the Hospital, in the event of the reasonable requirements of the Commissioners not being complied with, and upon their representation; right of appeal to Parliament, or to some practical body, being, at the same time, conferred upon the hospital authorities.

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## *A Theistic Monomaniac's Suicide.*

A book full of interest and of ghastly instruction might be compiled from newspaper cuttings of extraordinary suicides. Of these few would be more startling than one recently reported at Kemerton near Tewkesbury. The head gardener to a Mrs. Holland, named Adams, aged 40, was found burnt to a cinder in the root-house. The under-gardener had known him for two years, and having been informed that he was

* In our opinion the same objection applies to the restriction on signing a medical certificate.—[EDS].

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