adoption of the report, the latter giving an admirable illustration of the usefulness of aid in helping recovered persons to re-start in life.

The work of the Association is steadily growing, but even now only 250 persons of the 7000 annually discharged from asylums are aided. There must certainly be a larger number needing aid, who are not reached by after-care.

The oft-repeated suggestion was made that the Association should decentralize; hitherto attempts in this direction have been made by voluntary local secretaries. These have been appointed in many of the large towns, but no great success has hitherto attended these efforts.

The Council, we are informed, has under consideration a scheme for establishing divisional centres, in which a paid agent should be employed: the finding and visiting the homes, obtaining exact information in regard to the characters and capabilities of the patient, the abilities of friends to aid, the form of occupation suitable, and the trustworthiness of the employers with whom the patient is placed, entailing an amount of work, time, patience, and experience which cannot be expected of a voluntary helper.

The income of the Association fell last year to little over £600, and the difficulty of raising funds was well illustrated by this meeting. There was a large room full of well-dressed, interested persons; but, apart from habitual subscribers, little over £8 was raised.

With such limited means the extension of the work by means of new centres becomes a difficulty; but the Association has accumulated a reserve fund, which will enable it to make the attempt if co-operation can be obtained. It would be very desirable that a few suitable cottage homes could be found in each county; and if asylum superintendents would aid in this direction they would greatly enhance the usefulness of the Association.

Private or Pauper?

A question of some interest is under discussion between the authorities of the Chichester Asylum and the Commissioners in Lunacy. The asylum is intended primarily for pauper

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patients, for whom the maintenance rate charged to the guardians is the maximum allowed by the Act, *viz.*, fourteen shillings per week. This charge does not, however, cover the whole cost of maintenance, and is supplemented from the county fund. The asylum receives private patients also, and for these it charges twenty-one shillings, presumably making a small profit out of them. The guardians who pay for the pauper patients are entitled, and are bound, to recover from the relatives of these patients as much of the charge of maintenance as these relatives can reasonably be expected to pay. In one case they recover the whole fourteen shillings; and under these circumstances the patient lodges a claim to be removed from the register of pauper patients and entered on the register of private patients, the ground of his claim being that he repays to the guardians the whole charge of his maintenance.

The claim does not appear to us a valid one.

"Private patient" is defined by the Act of 1890 as "a patient who is not a pauper."

"Pauper" is defined as "a person wholly or partly chargeable to a union, county, or borough."

"Expenses of maintenance" are "the reasonable charges of the lodging, maintenance, medicine, clothing, and care" of a patient.

It is contended, first, that since the patient pays only the rate charged for paupers, and not the full rate charged for private patients, he is not entitled to be placed upon the register of the latter. This contention does not appear sound. The asylum authority may charge for private patients "such terms" as it may "think fit." There is nothing in the Act to prevent it from receiving patients upon unremunerative terms if it chooses to do so; and it seems that it is entitled to reduce the charge for private patients, or for any particular private patient, to fourteen shillings or less. The Act does, no doubt, contemplate that private patients will be received at a profit, and, if a patient is received as a private patient at a less rate than his actual cost of maintenance, it would seem that he then becomes "partly chargeable to a county," and thereby takes of necessity the status of a pauper. In the case of the Chichester Asylum, the total cost of maintenance does in fact exceed the fourteen shillings which is paid for the pauper patients, and it would appear that a patient is still "partly chargeable" to the county,

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and therefore not entitled to be placed on the register of private patients unless his payment to the asylum authority is at least equal to the cost of his maintenance. The question, however, turns upon the meaning of the word "chargeable," which is not defined in the Act, and may perhaps be open to doubt.

It is unnecessary, however, to decide this point, since there is another ground, which seems incontestable, for holding that the patient is a pauper, even although he repay to the guardians the whole of the rate which they pay to the asylum, and although the rate so paid were sufficient to defray the whole of the cost of maintenance in the asylum. In such a case the asylum authority would be at no charge for the patient, who would no longer be even partly chargeable to the county; but he would still be indebted to—that is, partly chargeable to—the guardians through whom the payment was made. For the whole of the fourteen shillings collected by the guardians from the relatives of the patient would be paid over intact to the asylum authority, leaving nothing in the hands of the guardians to recoup them for the time and trouble and expense involved in collecting and forwarding the money. They would be out of pocket in respect of book-keeping, postage, stationery, and so forth. If it be contended, which I think it cannot rightly be, that these expenses are so small as to be neglectable, and *de minimis non curat lex*, there are other considerations of greater weight. As long as the patient's name is borne upon the books of the guardians as a pauper patient, so long is he entitled to the protection of the guardians. They are bound by law to visit him, either themselves or through their representative. To them he has the right of complaint, and to him they are guardians in the sense that his complaints may be made by them ground of expostulation and remonstrance to the asylum authority. As long as he enjoys these privileges, which come to him gratuitously by reason of his status as a pauper, so long he cannot divest himself of that status. As long as he is borne upon the books of the guardians, and receives from them in consequence gratuitous services of whatever nature, so long he is "chargeable" to the union, and so long he must be considered a pauper.

C. M.

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