PARISH COUNCILS AND SCOTTISH ASYLUMS.

Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Secretary of State for Scotland, received a deputation from parish councils on the 23rd January. The deputation appeared in support of a memorial urging the promotion of legislation to secure direct representation of parish councils on district boards of lunacy, and on the boards of royal and chartered asylums. It was stated that 356 parish councils supported the contentions of the deputation, and that these councils had under care 8377 insane persons, whereas 450 parishes with 4260 patients had taken no action in the matter.

Lord BALFOUR, in reply, insisted on the difference between poor-houses and asylums. He said that asylums have large curative effects, and should be as good as modern science can devise. He could not promise immediate legislation, but he pronounced himself entirely in favour of the independent audit of the accounts of district lunacy boards. Lord Balfour pointed out that the parish councils are not responsible for the treatment of lunatics, but are only bound to remove them to an asylum and pay for them there. The treatment rests with the district boards of lunacy, subject to the control of the General Board in Edinburgh. He further showed that the county council constituency is the same as the parish council constituency, which is really representative of all classes of the ratepayers, and deprecated any great increase in the numbers of the district lunacy boards. Referring to Inverness, eighty-three parishes would require representation. As to the plea that payments and representation should go together, Lord Balfour pointed out that where parish councils manage their own asylums (*e.g.* Edinburgh) the town councils suffer the same injustice, being requisitioned for the money to build, yet without representation. The town councils would naturally make the same request as the parish councils if the question is touched, and he doubted if the parish council of Dundee would care for that. He recognised that if parish councils were represented on district boards having no asylums of their own they would be parties to the making of contracts for the maintenance of their insane patients, but did not think that would carry them far, as the General Board has power to fix the cost. Lord Balfour suggested that the county councils should elect those of their number who are also parish councillors, in so far as possible, to the district lunacy boards, and thus gain much without legislation. With regard to the royal asylums he saw grave difficulties. Although they have privileges which should not be continued, they were built by charitable donations, and not by public rating. The intimate connection in these institutions between private and state-paid patients would have to be considered, and in view of the difficulties it would be necessary to consult the General Lunacy Board and the Local Government Board. Lord Balfour guarded himself against any promise of immediate legislation.

TYPHOID FEVER CAUSED BY CELERY.

In a report published by the Springfield *Republican* of December 14th, 1899, on an outbreak of typhoid fever which occurred recently in the Insane Asylum, Northampton, Massachusetts, U.S.A., the disease appears to have been originated and spread by means of celery. It seems that up to September 9th, 1899, the institution had been singularly free from typhoid fever, there having been only four cases in ten years. But on and after that date cases occurred with alarming frequency, so much so that in about two weeks forty inmates were stricken with the malady, which, moreover, exhibited no signs of abating. Accordingly the services of Dr. Morse, of the Massachusetts State Board of Health, were requisitioned, and he was requested to make an investigation. The fact was then disclosed that patients, nurses, farm help, and kitchen help were affected, and further, that the only patients attacked were those who paid for their care at the institution. Therefore it seemed probable that the cause of the epidemic was due to some article of food of which the patients, nurses, and servants partook, and in which the non-paying patients had no share. The discovery was made that the paying patients were sometimes supplied with extra articles of food, such as fruit and vegetables. At the time of the epidemic they received celery raised on the farm.

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