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Editorial.

COUNTY COUNCILS AND THE CARE OF THE INSANE.

An important duty devolving upon County Councils is the supervision of Asylums for the Insane. Thus one of the duties of the London County Council is the provision of asylums for pauper lunatics, and it has under its control the great asylums at Bantstead, Bexley, Cane Hill, Claybury, Colney Hatch, Hanwell, Horton, and the Manor, Epsom, containing altogether over 16,760 beds. It must be remembered that a considerable proportion of these beds are occupied by women, and that many women nurses, as well as servants, are also employed. It is most essential, both for the welfare of the patients, that women inspectors should be appointed who would be accessible to the female patients and who would be able to report concerning the efficiency of the nursing service and the domestic management, upon which the comfort of all the patients, and the general welfare of the institution, so much depends.

So far there are no such officials, and the female patients in the asylums, and their friends for them, have no possibility of bringing their point of view before an official visitor of their own sex. The Lunacy Commissioners are men, so are the Masters and Visitors in Lunacy. On legal and medical questions these officials are experts, and their opinions have corresponding weight, but they are not experts in nursing or in domestic matters, and it is of the highest importance for the efficient care of the insane that women, selected with special reference to their experience in these matters, should be forthwith appointed as visitors or inspectors of asylums, to furnish reports concerning both these depart-

ments. The women patients would thus have the opportunity and consolation of bringing any grievances before members of their own sex.

It must be remembered that patients in both public and private asylums frequently receive few visits from their relatives. It may be that relations are advised to keep away from them, or that they do so because of the pain they feel at seeing those near and dear to them mentally afflicted. These patients are thus entirely under the control of those who have charge of them, and when we remember that any complaint on the part of the insane patient is discounted, by reason of the disease from which he (or she) is suffering, the great importance of outside inspection is evident. In many instances, no doubt, every care is taken to surround them with an environment which is conducive to their recovery, in others, unfortunately, it is not so. For instance, inefficient and callous attendants, who may be quite clever enough to conceal their defects from both a medical man and a Commissioner in Lunacy, during their brief visits, may, nevertheless, by their inefficiency and their lack of kindness to a patient mentally unstable, aggravate the condition of mental instability into one of incurable insanity; and all the time relations may be paying, at considerable personal sacrifice, fees which should ensure skilled care and every comfort for the sick person.

Women will now take their seats on our County and Borough Councils, and we hope, so far as our public asylums are concerned, that they will make it one of their first duties to see that these institutions are no longer entirely man managed, but that women also take a rightful part in their government. They owe it to their afflicted sisters that this necessary reform should take place with as little delay as possible.

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