

The Lunacy Bill.

The Women's Local Government Society have sent a letter to the Prime Minister on the subject of the Lunacy Bill, which was introduced in the House of Lords by the Lord Chancellor on May 1st.

By Schedule I., Clause 5, the Lord Chancellor is empowered to appoint a woman as an unpaid commissioner. Although this clause is directly of an enabling character, it would create a new statutory disability for women, by implying the ineligibility of all women for appointment as paid Commissioners, and therefore, during the Committee stage of the Bill, Lord Courtney of Penwith sought to delete the word "unpaid" with the object of giving the Lord Chancellor discretion to appoint a woman, whether as a paid or as an unpaid commissioner. The Lord Chancellor agreed that it would not be easy to overstate the importance of having women associated with the care of the insane, and he unreservedly assented to the principle of the amendment, but could not accept it at the present time, the Bill being of a temporary character. The amendment was by leave withdrawn.

The Society, in their letter, lay stress on the fact that the temporary character of the Bill does not render harmless the imposition of the disability, for such imposition by statute, even in an Act of a temporary character, would carry weight when proposals of a more permanent character come before Parliament. The letter was signed by the President of the Society, Lady Strachey; the Chairman of Committee, Mrs. Theodore Williams; Miss Leigh Browne, Hon. Secretary; Dr. Shipman, and five other members of the Committee.

Enclosed with the letter was the following memorial:—

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE HERBERT HENRY ASQUITH, K.C., M.P., PRIME MINISTER AND FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY.

The Respectful Memorial of the Undersigned Sheweth

That in England and Wales there are more than 70,000 certified women lunatics, and that the members of the Commission to whom complaints are to be made by patients are all men.

That the physical details of daily life include intimate matters about which women cannot speak to men without reserve; that amongst so great a number of patients there must be many in whom the sense of decency is unimpaired; and that such persons may suffer acutely, and be helpless to secure relief.

That there is a class of lunatics whose mental defect lies chiefly in abnormal sexual feelings, and

that such cases should be inspected by persons of their own sex.

That men interested in the welfare of women lunatics under their charge have called attention to the fact that there occur difficult and delicate problems which ought to be dealt with, but with the conditions of which they cannot come into touch.

That the number of women attendants in lunatic asylums is very large; that most have received no previous training; that the conditions of their work are very exhausting; and that there is ground for the belief that if opportunity for supervision were given to properly qualified women, having the authority of Commissioners in Lunacy, the efficiency of the staff on the women's side would be increased.

And that for the foregoing reasons there is urgent need for the co-operation of women medical practitioners on the Lunacy Commission as soon as such appointments shall be feasible; and that there is also need for the appointment at an early date of women with suitable qualifications among the unpaid Commissioners.

Wherefore

Your Memorialists pray that the Lunacy Bill may be so amended that when it passes into law it may contain provision that any vacancy occurring among the paid or the unpaid Commissioners may be filled up by the appointment of such person of either sex, and whether married or not, as the Lord Chancellor may appoint.

The memorial was signed by eighty-four most representative men and women.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON TUBERCULOSIS.

Under the patronage of the King and Queen of Italy the Seventh International Congress on Tuberculosis will meet in Rome on the 24th of September next, and last until the 30th. The Congress will be divided in three sections—the etiology and epidemiology of tuberculosis; pathology and therapeutics (medical and surgical) of tuberculosis; and social defence against tuberculosis. The official circular directs all those who intend to take part in the Congress to write to the Secretary-General, 36 Via in Lucina, Rome, sending the Congress fee, 25 lire (one pound) to the Treasurer at the same address. This fee confers full membership and entitles to all the privileges of the Congress. On arriving in Rome members should go at once to the offices at the above address to get their admission cards, badges, invitations, and tickets. Nurses are invited to show their work at the Congress by sending exhibits to the Special Committee for the Exhibition of Social Hygiene.

HYGIENE IN NEW YORK.

New York City now has in operation twelve open air schools and classes, and definite provision has been made for fourteen similar classes to be opened by next fall.

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