

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

THE CASE OF RICHARD THORNTON.

WEDNESDAY, 7TH SEPTEMBER, 1904.

DR. LEVINGE examined.

Mr. Beetham (to Dr. Levinge): This man Thornton has been dismissed by you, and now appeals to the Minister to give him an opportunity of reinstating himself. Perhaps it would be better to justify your dismissal of the man and let him make his statement. Please state your reasons for dismissing Thornton.

Dr. Levinge: Shortly, I discharged him on the statement made to me by the Head Attendant [Statement produced, marked A] which conveyed to me that he had been guilty of ill-treatment of a patient. These are the facts in this statement, and they are in evidence now.

(To Mr. Beetham): I received this report from the Head Attendant and investigated the matter. I examined Thornton, and he made any statement he desired.

Dr. Levinge (continuing): I asked Thornton why he went to the patient's room at all at that particular hour of the morning (about a quarter to 6), when the patient was still under the charge of the night attendant, and also why he went near the patient as he was not connected with that ward. He said the patient had been noisy and kept him awake, and that he went to see what was the matter. On pressing him, he said he went out of "curiosity." Thornton says in that letter that I gave him no opportunity of knowing the evidence. He knew the evidence perfectly well. I did not hand him that paper [the statement produced], but I examined him on the subject of why he went to the patient's room. I did not hand him the paper, as I say, but I told him what he was charged with. He protested he had never ill-treated any one, which led me to believe that he knew what he was charged with.

Mr. Thornton: I do not wish to put any questions to Dr. Levinge except as to character.

Dr. Levinge: Well, I have nothing else against you.

Dr. Levinge (continuing): I would like to say that he protested his innocence, and I said, "Well, if you are an innocent man, sue me for a month's salary as others have done." He said, "I would not do that; I am an ignorant man." "Well," I said, "if you do not want to do that, you can appeal to the Inspector or to the Minister." He then asked me for a testimonial, but I said, "No, not until you establish your innocence."

Mr. Thornton: This account of the matter is quite correct.

The Head Attendant's report was then handed to Mr. Thornton for his perusal before putting any questions he wished to ask.

Dr. Levinge (to Mr. Beetham): Thornton might pass through the ward; there is no regulation on the subject except that patients are in charge of the night attendant. He had no business to see the patient in the ordinary course of things, but there is no regulation to the contrary.

Mr. Beetham asked if the patient ——— was capable of giving any statement, but was informed by both the doctor and the Head Attendant that he was very rowdy at the time, and not capable of making any rational statement.

EDWARD NEWPORT, Head Attendant, examined.

Witness (to Dr. Levinge): I came into the building on the morning referred to before the regular hour for coming on duty. I slept in the building all night, and started on my rounds at 5.40—started in D Ward. I should think I got into the ward about 5.50. I went into ———'s room. I opened the door, and saw he was comfortably in bed. There was just a little urine on the floor at the foot of the bed. I spoke to him; said "Good morning," and he answered. I went about 4 chains further down the ward—five doors on. When I got to the day-room I noticed that ———'s room-door was open; it was not open when I left. I saw Thornton come out of the room; I was standing behind the door when he came out.

Mr. Thornton: I admit I came out of the room.

Witness (to Dr. Levinge): Thornton did not see me; he had no business there. There were about twenty attendants on duty, and if he had wanted any assistance it was his duty to see the night attendant in D Ward. He had no business there whatever. He had nothing to do with that ward at all. To pass the patient's door in going from where he slept he would have to go out of his way. When Thornton saw me, he came out of ———'s room, locked the door, and said (in passing the night attendant, about three yards away), "I have had no sleep all night through this noisy bugger ———." Then Thornton took his teacup from the attendant, and ran along into D Ward. Stevens (the attendant) did not see Thornton coming out of the patient's room. I did not hear him tell Stevens he was in the patient's room.

Mr. Thornton: I did not tell the charge day attendant that I had been in the room. I did not tell anybody.

Witness (to Dr. Levinge): About one minute after Thornton had left the room, I went in with Attendant Stevens. We found the patient lying across the centre of his bed in a state of collapse. Not more than five to seven minutes elapsed between the time I saw him first and the second time. The bedclothes were disarranged, and there was urine strewn all over two-thirds of the floor.

Dr. Levinge (to Mr. Beetham): I do not think the patient is suffering in such a way that the condition of the room might be accounted for by his being disturbed. I do not think there was any physical cause to account for the room being in that state.

Witness (to Mr. Thornton): I have known the buckets and mops to be taken through to F Ward; it ought not to be done. I have never seen you going through to look for buckets and mops. I have not known this patient hammer his door at night-time with his chamber. As to