

and will remove a very undesirable class from the wards of the main building, while at the same time affording them the comforts and safety of a quiet home. The chief fault of the North House is that it will not accommodate half those old men qualified for such a building, and in this way it can only be looked on as a temporary makeshift till more extensive provision can be made for this class, including females, when it can be set apart for such an emergency as an outbreak of infectious disease.

The changes in the staff were not so numerous as in previous years, being ten of each sex, and these were chiefly amongst the junior attendants for such causes as approaching marriage, to better themselves, or others satisfactorily explained; but it is open to question whether the same degree of efficiency has been maintained, and it is certain that the applicants for the position of female attendant have not the same standard of qualification, in several respects, as those of former years.

In reference to this subject I desire to make some remarks on the agitation by the attendants for the betterment of their position by increase of pay, shorter hours, &c., which I trust will not be considered out of place.

I have reason to think that this has been almost entirely on the part of the male attendants, or a certain proportion of them, or at their instigation, and is due to interested but indiscreet interference and encouragement with its unsettling influence on them, which is reflected on the work of the Asylum. But, after all, supply and demand should largely regulate the matter in their case as in the general labour-market, and, judged by this standard, there is no justification for any grievance, at least as regards the male attendants, for the number of applicants is just as great as at any time during the last twenty years, and far exceeds the number of vacancies. Indeed I never remember any time in which I have had so many applications from young men of a good stamp seeking employment here, and very many of these are the sons of farmers or young farm-hands, who seem allured by the attractions of life near town and want to leave the country—the very thing, as I believe, statesmen here and elsewhere are seeking to counteract and discourage.

Neither do I think the older attendants can show much ground for agitation, except the same laudable desire we all have to better our positions, especially when invited to formulate demands, for the changes are not amongst them, and they seem reluctant enough to try their chances again in the general labour-market, being apparently satisfied that they cannot do better. But this reluctance to move on causes stagnation in promotion and so fosters discontent, with its consequent indifference, slothfulness, and inefficiency, because the scale of increase is not progressive beyond a certain salary, unless on advancement. This, I think, a distinct grievance, for a good man, possibly better even than his senior and superior officer, is thus often kept back for many years on a comparatively low salary through no fault of his own, and all the time may possibly wish to get married, and is prevented from making a comfortable home. In my opinion the scale for increase of salary should not depend alone on promotion, but on the man's worth and length of service, irrespective of advancement to the position of charge attendant, and on the recommendation of his superior officers; for very many of those employed in various ways outside ordinary ward duties are equally efficient and valuable to those more directly engaged in that way.

The case of married attendants demands some special attention, for, though that condition is not, in my opinion, any particular recommendation—indeed it is often the reverse—their allowances cannot be considered of the same value to them as they are to single men, seeing that they must keep up homes outside. Men should not be encouraged to marry, till they are at least two years in the service, by which time, according to the present scale, their salary would have risen to £80 a year, with board, lodging, &c., and by that time the superintendent should have had sufficient experience of their work and be in a position to recommend whether it is worthy of further remuneration. I do not think this should take the form of house allowance, because in the first place such would be direct encouragement to marriage, and too many married men are a disadvantage and inconvenience to the service, and, secondly, because single men may be equally valuable and deserving of recognition, and would thus be penalised.

To sum up, the increase of salary should be progressive up to £100 a year depending on the man's worth and length of service irrespective of promotion, but in the case of single attendants, after reaching £80 a year, it might be allowed to accumulate and be given as deferred payment, with interest, on getting married or quitting the service, or as a bonus after so many years. He would thus have something definite to look forward to and some savings effected. There should also be more elasticity in the estimates in the way of a vote for contingent increases of salary on the urgent recommendation of the Superintendent, for it is unreasonable that a tradesman who applies for an increase of salary, say in October, should have to wait nearly twelve months before he knows whether it will be granted; in this way good men are often lost to the service who might be retained were the responsible officer in a position to say, within a reasonable time, that he would get this extra remuneration.

The question of the length of hours is only being used, in my opinion, as a lever to obtain increase of salary, and I am satisfied it is not in itself any grievance with the attendants; moreover, alteration being impracticable, it is not worth further consideration. If there was any serious cause of complaint or dissatisfaction—any injustice, harsh treatment, excess of work from “sweating” or long hours of duty—there would not be so many applications for reappointment from those who have resigned from time to time, or, on the part of immediate relatives and friends of attendants, to join the service.

As regards the female attendants, the difficulty assumes a different form, inasmuch as the supply is not equal to the demand, and thus it requires different treatment. I have already pointed out that there has been a deterioration in the class of applicant, and I have from time to time verbally and in writing drawn your attention to this and to the difficulty of replacing those who leave, which at times has been very embarrassing. In this way I have often been obliged to engage an obviously unsuitable applicant to fill a gap, and as there may not be any marked reason for discharging such person she is allowed to continue on, though it is quite plain she will never be fit for the responsible position of charge