

(February 19th, 1906.)

Duty Toward the Insane.

By HON. W. J. HANNA, PROVINCIAL SECRETARY.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Canadian Club,—When last week I received your kind invitation to be present here to-day accompanied as it was by your voluntary offer to listen for a few minutes to a talk from me on whatever subject might come in sight, I felt at once that I should not be doing my duty to the public if I allowed such recklessness on your part to go unpunished. I shall now impose the penalty, I hope it will not appear too heavy for this first offence.

There are many important subjects in sight—some of them very important. Our water-powers are a great subject, having regard to what they should mean to Ontario as an industrial centre, advancing step by step with the mighty interests of the West. Or one might mention forestry—a subject which must not be too long ignored, if we would discharge our duty to posterity. Amazing figures could be given as to the extent of our timber wealth, present and potential. Our mining interests, too, are now attracting world wide attention and present wonderful possibilities. These are but a few of the subjects from the fruitful field that lies immediately about us. I have surveyed as well that other field in which flourished the Morocco question, the Plumbers' Combine,

the Roosevelt wedding, and the Yonge street bridge—but I have refrained from all these and have chosen what is to me a much more formidable subject than any of them—one which thrusts itself upon me with the regularity of breakfast, one which may be thought of little moment only by those who have scarcely thought of it at all.

HISTORY OF THE QUESTION.

At Confederation the wisdom of the Fathers evolved a plan, the pivot of which was the assumption by the Federal authorities of all the debts of the old provinces and of all their indirect taxes as well. The result was that the individual provinces commenced life free from debt, but without the power to levy indirect taxes. The loss of the indirect taxing power worked some hardship in the east, but Ontario, notwithstanding the limitation of these sources of income, found herself on the morning of Confederation abounding in affluence almost without precedent in history. Here was a province with more direct revenue than sufficed for its ordinary needs. The occupation of its early Governments was not to sweep the horizon for subjects to tax, but to look about for suitable objects of which the money of the province might with advantage be spent. The things that commended themselves were: (1) Aid to railways, and (2) Relief of municipal taxation and local responsibility, which includes our schools, roads and charities. The Government continued the pursuit of the first object beyond the disposition of many of the people to follow, and in pursuit of the second it gave birth to the problem about which I am going to speak to you to-day.

Don't mistake me; I am not speaking as a member of a government. I am not going into a political talk, but one dealing with a social question of great importance, viz.: the care of our mentally affected, and the question whether a system cannot be devised which will have all the efficiency of our present method as towards the afflicted themselves and yet which will not be a direct incentive to the shirking of obvious duties on the part of the individual and the local community.

WHAT PRINCIPLE SHOULD GOVERN?

In my three years in the Legislature I have seen requests for aid to individuals and communities to the full extent of the object to be served, and it has occurred to me to ask:—What principle should underlie the giving of aid in such cases? Every time the Government relieves the individual or the community from the discharge of a duty which from its nature that individual or community would be better for discharging, or can discharge better than the Government, that Government, though its present financial aid may be very pleasant, does that individual or community a wrong. It encourages the relaxation

of effort, lets down the moral tone and saps the virility of the recipient. This applies not only to the working of the charitable institutions, but to other work, as well. It is, indeed, a principle of too general application. We look at colonization roads, and it applies there. There are districts now rich enough to at least help to build their own roads, in which a suggestion to that effect would receive scant encouragement. We look at some branches connected with the agricultural department, and it applies there. But I propose to touch the question to-day only as it is applicable to the care of the mentally afflicted class.

We have in the institutions for the insane in this Province 6,000 people. These are maintained at an annual cost of quite \$1,000,000, if we allow anything at all for capital account. For the maintenance of but 1,200 of these (or about 20 per cent.) is anything contributed by the patients themselves or by those legally or morally responsible for their care and comfort, and for these 1,200 the total amount collected for the year ending September 30 last, was less than \$115,000; which is the highest point yet reached, and much of this was contributed by the working classes, who are, as a class, the least disposed to avoid payment. This means that 88 per cent. of the cost of maintenance is defrayed by the Province.

INSANITY A DISEASE.

It has been said that governments owe it to themselves as a measure of self-protection to take care of this class. While acknowledging the duty I would place it on far higher grounds. As a measure of humanity and practical Christianity, I would say we owe the afflicted the best and tenderest care we can give them, and if it comes to choosing between the best system and one less efficient to this class, I would unhesitatingly advocate the most efficient system, regardless of expense, and if the province were polled on the question I am satisfied this would be the almost universal verdict. For people are realizing to-day, as they never did before, that insanity is not an offence; it is an affliction. That it is not a disgrace; it is a disease.

There are those who claim that much has been saved to our citizens by the mere fact that we started in the business of caring for this class on a centralized plan, and that central control of these institutions, as distinguished from local or municipal control, whether by cities or counties or groups of counties, has proved itself better in many ways. The central plan should result in the decreased cost of maintenance per head, it affords room for more modern methods and for healthy rivalry between institutions, it admits of better service and better food, clothing and care, it admits of better accounting and auditing, better discipline amongst employes, more chances for promotion, more opportunity furnished for comparison and mutual improvement. The central

plan is superior to the localized one at many points, but it is greatly behind it in one, and that a most important one, and it is this: That the central system destroys that careful oversight of each individual case which is the distinctive feature of local interest and control. It is because of this inherent defect of the central control that we have this anomaly; our system, which is the best and cheapest per head, is the one that produces the greatest number of heads.

While efficient central control may be the better for the sufferers, and may be the more economical when the expense is calculated at per head, yet without local supervision to prevent abuses, it acts as a perfect drag-net with the meshes all too small. It draws in all the cases that should come in, together with very many cases which should not. On the other hand, a municipally managed institution might be administered in too parsimonious a spirit. In such institutions efficiency and small cost might be mistakenly regarded as synonymous terms. Admission would be made too difficult and curable cases might be neglected until they became incurable, and persons who ought to be under seclusion would go on propagating their kind, and, generally, immurement in one of these places would come to be looked upon as a greater calamity than going to prison.

The superiority of the localized system consists in the fact that the municipal officers have personal knowledge of every case, and of the ability of the relatives to pay, and whether they should be made to pay. In this respect the Ontario system is deplorably defective, and could not be made effective except at the cost of maintaining a horde of local officials, practically inquisitors, who would necessarily have to get the most of their information from municipal officials and others, whose sympathies would naturally lie in the direction of protecting those responsible.

INSANITY INCREASING.

Our system makes it easy to magnify the mental condition of the individual cases and to establish the inability of the relatives to do anything in support of the sufferers, it may be justly described as the finest on earth to produce a constant and increasing supply of patients. It is not merely patriotic pride to describe our population as among the soundest and healthiest on earth. Yet the number of mentally afflicted in our institutions is increasing at the rate which would be alarming indeed if an explanation of the increase were not forthcoming. In the service given in our institutions and the inherent unsoundness of our method of admitting patients and of collecting maintenance is to be found the partial explanation. What are the figures? Notwithstanding that we are among the sanest of peoples, and that there is little admixture of race among us—said by alienists to be a fruitful source of insan-

ity—we find that while we had but one insane person in each 1,188 of population in 1871, and in each 707 in 1881, and in each 613 in 1893 and in each 474 in 1901, we have one in each 340 in 1905; while in Quebec there is to-day only one in each 450; in New Brunswick one in each 460; in Nova Scotia one in each 850.

THE SITUATION STATED.

That is to say, according to the above figures insanity is three times what it was in 1871 and over twice what it was in 1881, and is rapidly increasing; and there is to-day nearly one-third more lunacy in Ontario than in Quebec and New Brunswick and two and a quarter times as much in Ontario as in Nova Scotia. It is useless to blame emigration and immigration for this state of affairs. The four Provinces suffer and benefit equally from those causes, and as to the plea that immigrants furnish more than their share of the insane, this is only very slightly the case, the fact being that the native born constitute 87 per cent. of the whole population and 80 per cent. of the patients; and this difference is partially accounted for by the fact that the immigrant population of our institutions is entirely made up of the friendless of a class which, if native-born, would have friends to take care of them. While capable of partial explanation, these figures raise at once the question: To what extent is the policy on which our expenditure is based responsible, and what is the remedy? The trouble with all Government help is that the help is so pleasant to take that it is apt to create an appetite for more. After one experience of Government help, people come to rely upon it instead of upon their own exertions. If we had not begun by aiding railways so liberally, without a doubt another method of financing the building of railways would have been evolved here, as it was in American States, not a whit richer or more enterprising than we. Is Government aid to-day given in such a way as to kill individual effort, and can it be given in such a way as to stimulate it? Had the plan originally adopted, or since pursued, retained in some way the assistance of the municipality in determining who are properly admissible and who should pay, and to what extent it would have enlisted the help of thousands of persons having intimate knowledge of the cases, who would all have been interested in some degree in seeing that the system was not abused. One of the most conspicuous consequences of the plan adopted is that it has developed a system which, however humane and efficient it may be, has a pauperizing tendency. It deprives the communities and individuals of all the incentives to the exercise of that oversight which only they can give, and supplies them with potent, and in some cases irresistible, inducements to charge upon the Province the care of the senile, the destitute and the weak, who, by any stretch of imagination can be held to be defective in intellect. No such complaint exists in the

cases of Houses of Refuge and of non-pay hospital patients. Does the local knowledge and interest in these cases furnish the explanation?

I have given you the situation that presents. I have stated the problem. I ask the Canadian Club to solve it. I impose but one condition, and that is—that your solution shall not result in increased burdens on the municipalities.
