

ONTARIO LEGISLATURE.

FIRST SESSION — THIRD PARLIAMENT.

THURSDAY, Dec. 2.

The Speaker took the chair at three o'clock.

PETITIONS.

The following petitions were presented:—

By Mr. Clarke (Norfolk)—Petition of James Flaherty and others, of Shuniah, praying against the dismemberment of Shuniah.

By Mr. Meredith—Petition of the Erie and Huron Savings and Loan Society, praying for a change of corporate name.

Also,—Of the incorporated Synod of the Diocese of Huron, praying to limit the time for the sale of Rectory Lands.

By Mr. Scott—Petition of the Town Council of Peterboro', relative to the debentures of the town.

NEW BILLS.

The following Bills were read a first time:—

Mr. Currie—Respecting election of members of the Local Assembly.

Mr. Currie—To abolish Grand Juries in the Province of Ontario.

LUNATIC AND IDIOT ASYLUMS.

Mr. HARDY moved for a return showing the number of applications for admission to the Lunatic and Idiot Asylums during the years 1874 and 1875, giving the numbers of applications from each county; the numbers of applications granted, and those refused; also by counties; the number remaining on file at the present time; also by counties; the Orders or Rules of the Department regulating the admission of patients into each Asylum. He explained that his object in making the motion was in part to ascertain if insanity was on the increase. It was alleged that lunacy had largely increased during the past three years, and the data in possession of the Asylum authorities would in some degree enable the House to ascertain whether that allegation were correct or not. He also desired to ascertain whether the Asylum accommodation of the Province at the present time was satisfactory, or whether further accommodation was required. Judging from the presentments of Grand Juries in some counties, it appeared as if in some districts the same unfortunate condition of affairs now prevailed as existed before the London Asylum was established, the gaols being often used for accommodating such unfortunate. That was a state of affairs not entirely creditable to the Province, and one which the House would not desire should continue. He also asked that the rules and regulations on which patients were admitted to the asylums should be brought down. Some complaints had been made that applications for the admission of patients were treated a little too summarily or abruptly, that refusals were too easily made by the Inspector, and that perhaps too much power rested in the hands of the Inspector in regard to that matter. He did not pronounce whether these complaints or murmurings were or were not properly founded or just. But some persons in corresponding with the Department, thought it seemed very easy in refusing the application, either to state that there was no accommodation or to give other reasons equally cogent. At the same time it never happened that the Asylum was so crowded that a dangerous patient could not be accommodated, nevertheless, the applications were refused; and it was a question whether it rested with the Inspector to admit or refuse patients. The House should be informed as to whether there were rules and regulations regarding the admission of patients. The proposed return would also afford information as to whether there were any particular place more affected by lunacy than the rest of the Province, and whether cities or towns more largely contributed to the inmates of these institutions. When such particulars were furnished the House would be in a position to consider the desirability of legislative action in regard to the subject.

Mr. WILLS hoped the motion would be amended so as to include the statement of the number of applications received, the number refused, and the reasons given for

such refusal.

Mr. HARDY remarked that such an addition would involve a statement of the names of all applicants which it was desirable to avoid.

Mr. LAUDER observed that considerable difficulty was experienced with regard to obtaining the discharge of patients from lunatic asylums. The friends of an inmate who appeared fit to be removed endeavoured to procure his discharge, but the routine was so elaborate and cumbersome that they had to abandon the attempt. He hoped a clause for a statement of the regulations for the discharge of patients would be added to the motion.

Mr. MOWAT said that the discharge of patients from the asylums was regulated by law, as the hon. member would see by examining the statute book. He presumed the patient to whom his hon. friend had referred was one of that class known as a dangerous lunatic, and, of course, in such cases it was necessary for the medical superintendent to report whether in his opinion it would be safe to discharge such patients, and his opinion was subject to revision by the Lieutenant-Governor. They had not the slightest objection to lay before the House all the rules and regulations on the subject. He might say, however, that the answer which would be given as to the cause of refusing applications would be in every case want of accommodation; and no patient who was a fit subject for confinement in a lunatic asylum was refused admission on any other ground. The report of the Inspector which had already been brought down would give a good deal of the information which hon. members desired on the subject. It would give them the number of applications made for admission into the asylums. The number of lunatics confined in gaols for want of room in the asylums was 106; and the report would give the gaols among which this number was distributed. The Government had already announced their intention to ask the sanction of the House for money to provide further accommodation for these unfortunate people. The amount of such additional accommodation would be for about 400 patients, which he hoped would be considerably more than would be required during the present year.

Mr. MACDOUGALL said he did not know but the report of the Inspectors would furnish all the information asked for by the motion. The report would certainly show the number of applications.

Mr. MOWAT said it would not show the number made and refused.

Mr. MACDOUGALL said it would be necessary to give the number of applications from each county. It would also be satisfactory to know the accommodation at each asylum, and how it was filled up. He suggested that the words "at each asylum" be added to the motion.

Mr. MOWAT said the report would show the number admitted into each asylum in the year.

Mr. MACDOUGALL said that in that case his hon. friend had better strike out all reference to applications. In his experience in parliamentary matters, he had found that returns were frequently asked for when the information was really in the hands of the House, and clerks were thus put to a great deal of unnecessary work, and the House to unnecessary expense, in getting out special returns.

Mr. HARDY said his hon. friend had very likely not read the motion. What he wished to get was the localities from which the various applications had come, the number refused, the number admitted, and the number now on file. He believed there was nothing in the report of the Inspectors which gave the information he asked for except the statement of the numbers admitted.

Mr. MEREDITH said he hoped that in the return asked for a distinction would be made in the numbers belonging to each sex.

Mr. MOWAT said that he should mention that of the total number of lunatics now confined in the asylums—1,650—839 were males and 811 females.

Mr. MEREDITH—But with regard to the applications, I mean?

Mr. MOWAT said that they might be given in the return.

The motion was amended in accordance with these suggestions and carried.

DEPARTMENTAL BUILDINGS.

Mr. HAY moved for a statement of