

**PART V.—NOTES, NEWS, CORRESPONDENCE,
APPOINTMENTS, &c.**

*Hall v. Semple.—Letter from the Commissioners in Lunacy to the
Proprietor of Munster House, Fulham.*

(COPY.)

OFFICE OF COMMISSIONERS IN LUNACY,
19, WHITEHALL PLACE;
January 9th, 1863.

SIR,—In the letter addressed to you by the solicitors of the Board, in the month of August last, the censure of the Board was conveyed to you for your culpable neglect, before taking charge of Mr. James Hall as an insane patient, to ascertain by reading the certificates that they were in all respects conformable to the statute, and the opinion of the Board was expressed in the following terms: "There is no part of the duty of the proprietor of a licensed house which requires greater care than the examination of certificates. Your long experience ought to have rendered you familiar with the particulars in regard to them, which demand special attention, and the Commissioners, therefore, consider your negligence on this occasion as a most grave offence." Had you performed this, your obvious duty, you would not have received Mr. Hall, inasmuch as Mr. Guy's certificate was, upon the face of it, invalid and incapable of amendment under the statute, being founded upon an examination of the patient more than six weeks before its date.

The question of the sufficiency of the facts set forth in medical certificates admits in many cases of much doubt, and the certificates, in this respect, may be amended after the reception of the patient. It is entirely different if the examination of the patient took place, as in the case under consideration, more than seven days prior to admission. Mr. Guy's certificate bore date six weeks subsequent to the day on which he last saw Mr. Hall. This was fatal to the validity of his certificate; and it is, therefore, of paramount importance that proprietors and superintendents of asylums should, before taking charge of a patient, carefully peruse every certificate.

The Commissioners feel themselves called upon, in the existing circumstances, and for the above reasons, to intimate to you their determination to visit any violation of the provision of the law, such

as that of which you were guilty in Mr. Hall's case, with the penalties of the statute.

In order to the promulgation of their views, the Commissioners intend to circulate generally copies of the present communication.

I am,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed)

W. C. SPRING RICE,

Secretary.

C. A. ELLIOTT, Esq., Munster House, Fulham.

The Proposed Removal of Bethlehem Hospital into Surrey.

THE favorable proposals made for the transfer to the governors of St. Thomas's Hospital of the site of Bethlehem has led to the discussion, both by the court of governors and by the public press, of the expediency of such a step as the removal of this great middle-class hospital for the insane from the low-lying, unhealthy locality of St. George's Fields to the bracing air of the Surrey hills. 'The Times' has had a leader on the subject, based on a letter from our associate, Dr. Stevens, "one of the highest authorities on lunacy."

The hospital of S. Mary of Bethlehem, founded in 1256, stood in Bishopsgate Ward, without the City wall. Its site is now marked by Bethlem Court, off Bishopsgate Street. It was used as an asylum for the insane poor of London from 1547 to 1675. It stood (says Stowe) in an obscure and close place, near unto many common sewers, and also was too little to receive and entertain the great number of distracted persons, both men and women.

The second Bethlehem stood in Moorfields. Stowe praises it to the skies, but the Parliamentary Committee of 1815 gave a most frightful picture of its condition.

The present building in St. George's Fields was opened while that committee were sitting.

The Royal Hospital of Bethlehem has hitherto always been behindhand in adopting the improvements of medical science in the method of treatment of the insane. The Friends' Retreat in 1815 presented a very different scene from the horrors revealed by the Parliamentary Committee as existing in "Old Bedlam," and the results of a similar inquiry by the Home Secretary, in 1852, did not tend to alter the public impression of the unwillingness of the governors of Bethlehem readily to conform to the improvements in the treatment of insanity originating in the county asylums. On