

in the staff at Burnham must necessarily mean a loss of power, and there can be no question but that these changes have been far too frequent of late to be other than a distinct injury to the best interests of the institution. A number of these changes have been brought about from various causes, but in several instances the attendants have left to better themselves financially or otherwise. Burnham, as a locality in which to live, is most unattractive, being isolated and dreary, and depressing in its surroundings.

Holidays. Suggested increase of holidays. Scale of pay.

The attendants receive as holidays fourteen days annual leave, one Saturday and Sunday each month (with railway-ticket), and one Sunday in addition each month.

I think that the lot of the average attendant would be very materially improved and his position made very much more attractive by the grant of an extra week's holiday in each year, as well as an extra day's holiday in each month. The extra cost and inconvenience thereby incurred would be more than compensated for by the improved service that would be rendered as the result of an all-round satisfaction. Owing to the distance from Christchurch and the difficulties of getting there and back, the fullest benefit from the present monthly holidays cannot possibly be secured. Speaking generally, there does not seem to be any reason to find fault with the scale of pay. I have not gathered during the course of the inquiry that any real discontent exists on this score. In the case of the assistant-clerk the salary paid would appear to be very small; but then it must be remembered that the duties are those which might be readily discharged by a cadet for a similar wage, in which case the remuneration would be ample. In the case of the present officer, he is evidently contented with his position, or it suits him to remain there; or he would certainly have gone further afield long ere this.

(a.) RELATIONS BETWEEN MANAGEMENT AND STAFF.

Statements not repeated on oath.

A number of statements have been made from time to time, both in the public Press and elsewhere, with regard to the treatment of attendants by the Manager and Matron, both as to the hours worked and the want of consideration shown for the staff and their feelings. In order to clear up this matter in the fullest possible way, I have during the course of this inquiry examined upon oath all the present attendants at Burnham and six of the ex-attendants. There can be no doubt that at one time there was a great deal of simmering discontent among certain of the attendants at Burnham; and when the unfortunate incident occurred of Miss Lang being peremptorily discharged while suffering severely in health, this simmering discontent became very active, and culminated in certain statements, seriously reflecting upon the management, being publicly made. Many of these statements were greatly exaggerated, and some of them absolutely untrue. They were, however, circumstantially told, and bore the impress of truth, and quite justified the action of those to whom they were told in taking steps to have the fullest possible inquiry made into the whole condition of things at Burnham. After the most complete inquiry, and the affording of the amplest opportunity to all concerned to substantiate their grievances, I have come to the conclusion that those who complained so loudly were not prepared to substantiate their complaints on oath.

Case of Miss Lang.

The incident in connection with Miss Lang was, as I have already stated, a most unfortunate one. This lady had been at Burnham for some two years in the capacity of machinist, and was a most valued servant of the institution. For some time previous to the trouble she had been working at high pressure, mainly owing to the institution being shorthanded. The Sub-matron had recently left, and Miss Lang had been temporarily acting in that capacity. A Miss Fischer had been taken on as a temporary machinist, but was entirely inexperienced in the general work of the institution, and would be practically helpless in an emergency. Owing to the long hours required to be worked, and to the heavy strain of extra responsibility imposed on Miss Lang, she had run down in health, and was suffering a good deal with her teeth. She decided that she must go to Christchurch to have her teeth attended to, and she asserts that she made the Matron aware of her condition, and explained the position to her, and asked for leave. Mrs. Archey, the Matron, although recognising the fact that Miss Lang was entitled to leave, told her that she could not possibly be spared at that time from the institution, but could take her leave in the following week, and the missed holiday could then be made up to her. Miss Lang then wrote the following note to Mrs. Archey:—

"Mrs. Archey, Matron.

"I REGRET to say I must take my Saturday and Sunday after all. The work is well in advance, and I think Miss Fischer can manage now.

"E. LANG."

Mrs. Archey, regarding this as an act of insubordination, addressed the following note to Miss Lang, terminating her engagement:—

"Memorandum from the Matron, Industrial School, Burnham, to Miss Lang.

"April 14, 1906.

"As you refuse to carry out my orders, your services are no longer required.

"S. ARCHY, Matron."

Mrs. Archey now states that had she known that Miss Lang was suffering pain to the extent she has since described she would most certainly have allowed her to go, and would have taken over her duties herself. There is, of course, a conflict of evidence between Miss Lang and Mrs. Archey as to the extent of the latter's knowledge of the former's condition of health; but I find it quite impossible to reconcile Miss Lang's present account of her relations with the Matron with the tone and style of her letter to Mr. Archey, written four days after leaving the institution, as follows:—