

not be called on to provide immediately the considerable funds which would be necessary in several cases for total reconstruction, and in others for extensive alteration, such a course would, by itself, be occasionally tantamount to the extinction of the institutions for a long time. To meet this difficulty it would probably become necessary in some cases to raise loans on the credit of the colonial revenues. The required sums would not be large, as they would be needed only where the institutions themselves are small; and as regards the additional burthen which the payment of interest would impose on small revenues, it may be confidently asserted that such initial expense would be in part, if not wholly, returned indirectly by the economy of management, and of valuable time and lives which it is the direct tendency of improvements in construction and system to produce.\*

Should such a measure be carried into operation, it would probably be the commencement of general sanitary reform in countries where its advantages are at present unknown.

Single medical  
chief.

50. Next follows the consideration of who are and who ought to be the depositaries of power. It is not necessary to search for any special preliminary canons on the last point. It is enough to say that the government of the internal economy of hospitals and asylums ought to be given to persons who have the necessary knowledge and are in a position to give the necessary attention, and can be readily made responsible to some other superior power. The actual systems are often extremely ill qualified to fulfil these requirements.

It is in some cases difficult to ascertain the exact nature of the existing constitutions, and from nine hospitals and asylums, including five in the West Indian division, no information is given on this subject. Of the rest, omitting those of Jamaica, twenty-nine, including sixteen in the West Indian group, are governed by boards of a kind which will presently be described, four by boards of a different kind and with narrower powers, and twenty-five, including nine Canadian institutions, appear to be managed by medical superintendents without local boards. What the actual comparative results of these various systems are will appear subsequently.

The powers which in each case these governing bodies or persons have to exercise may be divided into four classes, being respectively the powers of making rules, or legislation, of financial administration, of patronage, and of inspection and supervision. It is plain that these powers are inconsistent, ought to be to some extent independent, and for their due exercise require very different qualifications. Yet in twenty-nine institutions nearly the whole are united in single boards, only some small fragments being here and there given to other and independent persons. These boards vary considerably in their composition and appointment, but they are usually made up of six or eight *ex officio* members, such as the mayor and last ex-mayor, clergymen, and occasionally official physicians, together with perhaps an equal number of nominees of the Governor. Such boards, however well they may be appointed, cannot as a body have professional knowledge or practical experience, and must be generally unfit to make regulations about matters which demand both professional knowledge and practical experience, and even though they may be presumed to receive the suggestions of the medical officers, and though their rules must be submitted to the Governors, an originally defective scheme is not likely to be made complete by after-suggestions. Again, they are too far removed from the actual working of the arrangements to be able to exercise that continuous supervision which is necessary for guarding against abuses and testing results. They are liable either to disagreement or to an apathy which leaves everything in the hands of two or three who may be actuated by interested motives; they cannot judge of the efficiency of attendants whom they see in a manner only on parade, and they have no professional pride to gratify, nor the misery to endure of having daily before their eyes the evil consequences of a defective system. Lastly, if from these causes the institutions suffer, there is no one on whom to fix the blame of abuses or omissions, and if the guilt is at last brought home to them they cannot be made answerable. It is impracticable to make a board, especially if composed of unpaid members, effectually responsible for the minutiae of their administration, and the difficulty is much aggravated where, as in the

\* See Section 58, p. 22.