

illness, but the cause was not then apparent ; the colour was probably due to two factors, *viz.*, altered blood passing down from the stomach and sulphide of iron formed from the gastric armoury.

That he did not complain of pain is not of course to be wondered at, as he was extremely demented, but the curious thing is that the contents of the stomach had not caused more acute symptoms, especially so in the case of the solid piece of iron sharply pointed at both ends and 76 grs. in weight. It seems likely that he swallowed the pieces of metal, at least, during the period he was employed at the smithy, where he ceased to work not later than the fall of the year 1903 ; at any rate, the fact that they were in parts deeply corroded points probably to their having been a long time in the stomach.

How the pieces of wire in the hepatic tissue and that in the gastrocolic adhesion reached these sites is matter for conjecture, but they certainly looked like the fragments of a pin with enlarged extremity.

I have to thank Dr. Eades, the medical superintendent of this asylum, for his courteous permission to give the foregoing account of a curious case.

Occasional Notes.

Boarding Out.

The discussion on the possibility of boarding out the insane in England has resulted in no definite action on the part of the Association. There appears to be a very general consensus of opinion that boarding out, although very desirable, is not to any extent practicable under the conditions that exist in the greater part of England.

The actual testing of this question will not apparently be undertaken by those concerned in the medical administration of asylums. Indeed, to ensure any success, the co-operation of the Lunacy Commission and that of the Poor Law Administrators is essential.

The former body is much too weak at present to add to its burdens so great an undertaking. The Poor Law authorities are, therefore, the only body who could move in the matter with any prospect of success. If they could be convinced that this procedure offered any possibility of economy something might be done. Unfortunately the capitation grant of 4*s.* per head per week for all insane persons in asylums stands in the way. Until this mischievous grant is re-distributed there is little

chance of Poor Law aid in promoting boarding out ; the rate-payers must be content to pay for the maintenance of the harmless insane in costly public institutions, and the benevolent must continue to regret that these unfortunates cannot obtain the advantages that have been shown to result from this system as carried out for so long a time, and to so great an extent in Scotland and elsewhere.

Superannuation and Old Age Pensions.

The superannuation of asylum officials is such an ancient subject and has been so frequently discussed in all its bearings that there would appear to be little scope for fresh aspects.

The Old Age Pensions Act, that comes into operation next year, has a very definite bearing on this matter as related to the superannuation of asylum attendants, etc., whose pensions do not largely exceed that of the Old Age Pensions Act, and who, by these pensions, would be debarred either altogether, or for the larger part, from coming under the provisions of that Act.

Those asylums which do not grant pensions, paying enhanced rates of wages, without prospect of superannuation, will become popular, since the attendant will not only have the increased pay, but will also in any case get a pension from the State. Probably most asylums will, in the interest of the community, consider it desirable to keep to the lower rate of pay, which the prospect of pension enables the employees to take, since the pension thus granted out of the county funds will in the end be a saving to the Old Age Pension Fund.

Certain asylums in recent years have made their attendants sign a declaration that they forego all claim to pensions, a procedure that is possibly illegal, but it may happen in the future that the employees, being assured of an old age pension, will everywhere demand an increased wage, the proffer of pension being no longer any great inducement.

The Commissioners in Lunacy in their forty-sixth and again in their sixty-first report dwell on fair wages, and the prospect of pension as being "the most influential inducements to really suitable persons, to enter asylum service and to remain in it as a permanent occupation." The main inducement, however,