

Beri-Beri in the Richmond Asylum.

The renewed outbreak of beri-beri in the Richmond Asylum at Dublin has led to a thorough investigation by independent experts of the conditions under which it has been redeveloped.

Dr. Patrick Manson, one of the experts thus called in, reports that the epidemic was certainly beri-beri, and that it originated, as it invariably does originate in temperate climates, from extreme overcrowding, associated with defective ventilation and dampness.

Sir Thornley Stoker fully confirms these views, adding saturated defiled soil and housing in wooden structures as aiding in the causation.

The female permanent hospital is taken by Sir Thornley Stoker in illustration; in this building seventeen patients slept on mattresses placed on the floor, sixty-three persons being crowded into accommodation which he estimated as suitable for twenty-five.

Dr. Manson recommended the abandonment of those rooms in which the flooring "is laid immediately on the damp soil," and Sir Thornley Stoker speaks of the floors as "poorly constructed, worn, and made of soft wood." "They are sponges to absorb infected material."

The infection of beri-beri, all authorities assert, especially lingers in wooden structures, which, as a result of the failure of all means of disinfection, have often needed to be destroyed.

From these facts it is easy to recognise that very sweeping changes will be required to free the Richmond Asylum from the periodical recurrence of this disease, probably in even more virulent forms.

The possibility of this being the case is shown by the fact that in the present outbreak seven of the nurses have been attacked, suggesting a more intense form of the disorder than in the previous epidemic when the sane were not affected.

Beri-beri, as Dr. Manson points out, is constantly being imported and seen by him at the Seamen's Hospital, etc., so that its effecting a lodgment under such favourable conditions for its cultivation as exist at the Richmond Asylum, is not a subject for any great surprise.

That a British Hospital for the Insane, at the close of the nineteenth century, should furnish such conditions for the

culture of disease, is a phenomenon that cannot but excite the utmost astonishment. It assuredly calls for prompt explanation and an equally prompt amendment.

The overcrowding and defects of structure were described six years ago by the Inspectors of Lunacy as "paralysing every effort to treat the insane." Yet since that report the overcrowding has increased rather than diminished, and we must conclude that the paralysis has continued and developed.

The responsibility for this scandal rests on the system on which Irish Asylums are administered rather than on the administrators.

The Board of Governors, who supervise the asylums, complain that they have no function to discharge in connection with the erection or enlargement of asylums.

The duty of providing the buildings rests with the Lord Lieutenant in Council, who is advised by a Board of Control (of which the Lunacy Inspectors are members), which carries out the directions received. The Board of Control also is probably not without its difficulties in obtaining the acceptance of its building schemes and the grant of funds.

Funds when granted can only be obtained from the Treasury through the medium of the Board of Works at a rate of interest ($3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.) of which several Boards are complaining.

The cumbersome character of this administration is obvious, and the difficulties and delays in getting such creaky machinery to work can be easily imagined, as well as the irritation arising amongst the workers.

The remedy is, that the various bodies concerned, instead of spending their energies in allocating blame to each other, should unite in a vigorous representation to the Government of their difficulties and disadvantages and in formulating a scheme by which these may be obviated.

The Care and Training of the Feeble-minded.

We note with satisfaction the spread of efforts to improve the condition of the class of helpless and (if unassisted) hopeless young persons who, while not sufficiently imbecile to be certified as such and sent to an idiot asylum, are nevertheless so far defective in brain function—or, as Dr. Warner has called it, "wrong-brained"—as to need kindly guidance