throat. The rule, in this condition, is that the patient, taking whatever he finds in his hand, proceeds to do with it what he is accustomed to do with it, or with any instrument resembling it; and he proceeds at once with his action. He does not seek favourable circumstances; he does not go upstairs, or out of doors, or into another room, to do it. He does it, or something as near it as he can, then and there, on the spot. Thus, a woman cutting bread and butter for her children's tea is seized with a fit, and in her post-epileptic automatism she goes on using her knife, not on the bread, but on her child's throat, the child being sitting beside her at the time. But she does not go into the next room to find the child, still less does she go upstairs and cut its throat in bed. Nor, if her hands are empty, does she go downstairs to fetch a razor. The action is unreasoning, not only in its main effect, but in all the details of its accomplishment. The action in this case was singularly efficient in its details, and unreasoning only in its main purpose.

On the whole, the case for epileptic automatism appears to me singularly weak, and the success of the plea of insanity must, I think, have been due to other considerations. Foremost among these was, no doubt, the absence of any reasonable motive for the crime. If it is, as the learned judge maintained, no business of the prosecution to prove a motive, it is certainly a duty which the jury imposes upon itself to attribute a motive, and to take this motive into consideration in arriving at their verdict. In this case there appeared to be no motive at all, and the prisoner appeared as much puzzled as every one else as to why the crimes were committed. It is impossible that such total absence of apparent motive should not have weighed with the jury. In connection with this absence of reasonable motive, a very strong history of insanity in the prisoner's family probably had great weight with the jury, and this family history was corroborated by the definite history of epilepsy in the prisoner himself. Either of these three circumstances, taken alone, would have raised a suspicion of insanity. The three together could hardly be resisted; and it is probable that, in returning the verdict they did, the jury formed a correct conclusion on correct grounds. The crime seems to have been one of those motiveless crimes that are not unfrequently committed by persons of the prisoner's history and antecedents. It is no very uncommon thing for a man of insane stock, himself showing strong evidence of neurotic inheritance by his liability to epilepsy, to commit a brutal and motiveless crime. We cannot penetrate into his consciousness and see precisely how the crime came to be committed; but we recognise, and juries recognise, that in such cases the family history and antecedents ought to be taken into account, and the prisoners ought not to be held fully responsible for the crime.

PARLIAMENTARY INTELLIGENCE.

House of Lords.

Lunacy Bill.

The House went into Committee on the Lunacy Bill.

On Clause 15, which gives power to the Commissioners to require amendments of regulations of hospitals,

Earl Russell, by way of amendment, moved the omission of the clause on the ground that it was not necessary to give such powers to the Commissioners in the case of county and other asylums which were managed by large public authorities, the members of which were elective and whose actions were subject to criticism.

The Lord Chancellor could not accept the amendment. He thought the alteration proposed by the clause was well advised. If the noble lord had suggested an alteration in the clause or the placing of some restriction upon

it, that would have been considered at a later stage before the Standing Committee, but his present proposal was to leave out the clause altogether.

Lord Monkswell entirely agreed that the clause as it stood gave too much power to the Commissioners in the internal management of asylums.

The Earl of Northbrook suggested that where asylums were maintained out of county or borough rates the council of the county or borough should have the opportunity of making representations against the proposed rules before the Secretary of State gave his decision. (Hear, hear.)

The Lord Chancellor thought this a very reasonable suggestion, and said he would welcome an amendment in that direction.

On Clause 23,

The Earl of Northbrook said he had been requested by the County Councils Association to suggest that this clause might with advantage be omitted. It did not appear to have essential connection with the rest of the bill, and county councils said, as he thought with justice, there were strong objections to the clause. It provided that the provisions of the Poor Law Superannuation Act, 1896, should be applied to the officers and employees of lunatic asylums, and the objection to this was that the nature of the employment of persons in lunatic asylums in constant communication with lunatics was such that the length of time required to give superannuation allowances to persons employed under boards of guardians was not properly applicable to persons employed in lunatic asylums. Under the present law, visiting committees could grant to any officer of 50 years of age and not less than fifteen years' service an allowance not exceeding two-thirds of his salary, subject to the control of the county council. This law had not worked badly, and though these officials had not the absolute right to a pension, as a matter of practice it was never refused. Under the proposal in the clause future officers in the asylums would be at a disadvantage, receiving a smaller superannuation and being subject to a 2 per cent. deduction from their salaries. The Poor Law Superannuation Act had not been received with unqualified approval throughout the country; it had been said, and he believed with truth, that the percentage was not sufficient to protect the ratepayers from loss, and there would be strong objection to the extension of the Act to another class of employees.

Earl Russell joined in the appeal to the noble and learned lord to omit the clause. It would be very strongly opposed in that House and elsewhere, both on the ground taken by the noble earl and on the ground that the scale of allowance was too liberal.

The Earl of Kimberley said the objections urged to the clause indicated the necessity for giving careful attention to the pension scheme, and, looking at the period of the session, he advised the omission of the clause.

The Lord Chancellor said the period of the session was a cogent argument. When he introduced the bill he mentioned that these superannuation clauses would not be pressed against any strong opposition. The proposals were attacked from two points of view—that the scale was too liberal, and that it did not do justice to persons employed in asylums. Of course, the attempt to force these clauses through might imperil the other clauses, to which there was no opposition and for which there was urgent necessity. Under the circumstances he yielded, for the prospect of opposition in the other House was a conclusive argument in the middle of July. He would propose the omission of all the superannuation clauses.

The clause, as well as Clauses 24 and 25, were omitted from the bill. The remaining clauses were agreed to, and the bill, as amended, was reported to the House.

House of Commons.

Beri-beri at the Richmond Lunatic Asylum.

On July 19th, in answer to Mr. P. A. M'Hugh, Mr. Gerald Balfour said—Thirty-six patients and three nurses in the Richmond Asylum are at present suffering from the disease known as beri-beri. The disease first appeared in

the institution about May, 1894, and continued until October, after which no fresh cases occurred. There was no outbreak in 1895, but it reappeared in August, 1896, since when the institution has not been entirely free from it, although it almost died out in the colder months. Ten nurses in all have suffered from it—viz., seven in 1896 and three during the present year. Medical experts are of opinion that the disease was fostered by overcrowding. It is the duty of the Board of Control to provide such accommodation as is necessary in the district asylums in Ireland. In consequence of the rapid increase of lunacy in the Richmond District, it was decided in 1892 to build an additional asylum for 1,200 patients at Portrane, and that work is now in progress. In 1893 and 1894 temporary buildings were erected at Richmond Asylum for 298 patients, and since then accommodation has been provided for 224 patients, and further buildings are now being erected, which, it is anticipated, will make the total accommodation sufficient for the number at present in the asylum. The Board of Control are anxious to aid and promote by every means in their power any reforms necessary for the improvement of the Richmond Asylum, and works are being carried out with the view of effecting that object.

Beri-beri.

On August 7th Mr. Sheehy asked the Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland whether he was aware that the medical superintendent of the Richmond Asylum had been complaining about the overcrowded condition of his institution in his annual reports since 1886 to the governors; and that a contract, involving nearly a quarter of a million sterling on the new asylum at Portrane, was given away by the Board of Control, which was an unrepresentative body, without consultation with the Board of Governors; whether he would state to the House the amount of money expended on temporary buildings which had been condemned by Dr. Patrick Manson, of London, and by Sir Thornley Stoker, of Dublin; and whether his attention had been called to the statement in the Inspectors' Report for 1891 that the Richmond Asylum was originally constructed for 600 patients, that there were now considerably over 1,800 patients in the asylum, and that the additional temporary accommodation did not even provide for the increase in the numbers, since the inspectors reported in 1890 that the congestion paralyses every effort to treat the insane.—Mr. Gerald Balfour replied that the fact was as stated in the first paragraph. It was not true that the contract for the Portrane Asylum was given away by the Board of Control without consultation with the Board of Governors. The expenditure on the temporary buildings which were erected with the concurrence of the governors amounted to about £12,000. The medical gentlemen referred to considered wooden buildings unsuitable for the treatment of beri-beri patients, but the buildings erected at Richmond had been designed with every possible attention to sanitary requirements, and were, in the opinion of the inspectors of lunatics, suitable for the accommodation of the insane.

The Certification of Lunatics.

Dr. Tanner asked the Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland whether, in the case of any dangerous lunatic confined in an asylum, in whose behalf application had been made that he or she should be discharged, having ceased to be insane, such application could not be entertained until it was certified to the Lord-Lieutenant by two physicians or surgeons that the individual had become of sound mind, or it had been certified by the resident medical superintendent or visiting physician that he had ceased to be dangerous, and if in the case of the two former authorities demanding such release any demur on the part of the local medical (asylum) authorities could prevent it.—Mr. Gerald Balfour replied—In the case of a dangerous lunatic committed to a district asylum under the 10th Section of the Act 30 and 31 Vict., Cap. 118, it is not necessary for two physicians or surgeons to certify that the individual has become of sound mind before an application for discharge can be entertained. The discharge of such lunatics is regulated

by Section 11 of the Act and by the latter part of Section 10. Section 11 requires the resident medical superintendent or the visiting physician to certify that the person has either become of sound mind or has ceased to be dangerous, while the latter part of Section 10 enables relatives or friends under certain conditions to take the lunatic under their care and protection on entering into sufficient recognisances for his safe keeping. But the Court of Appeal has held that there is no absolute right conferred by this section, and that it remains optional with the governors of the asylum to so transfer the custody of the lunatic.

Reformatories for Inebriates.

Dr. Farquharson asked the First Lord of the Treasury whether it was his intention to introduce, during the present session, the bill for the establishment of reformatories for inebriates, mentioned in the Queen's Speech; and, if he did so, whether he would include in it arrangements for the reception of habitual offenders in labour settlements, as recommended in the Departmental Committee (1895) on Habitual Offenders, Vagrants, Beggars, Inebriates, and Juvenile Delinquents (Scotland), and the report from the Departmental Committee on Prisons (1895)?—Mr. Balfour: No, Sir, I do not think there is any probability of the Home Secretary being able to introduce such a bill during the present session.—Dr. Farquharson: If the right honourable gentleman cannot find time to introduce the bill in this House, can he follow the precedent of the Private Bill Legislation (Scotland) Bill, and introduce it in another place where there is plenty of leisure?—Mr. Balfour: I will consult the Home Secretary.

THE RICHMOND ASYLUM.

The following letter, published in *The Dublin Daily Express*, conveys the views of a layman on the state of affairs in regard to this institution:—

To the Editor.

Sir,—In a leading article in your issue of this day you suggest that possibly I take a pessimistic view when I say that the first section of the permanent buildings of the new asylum at Portrane will not be available until well into the next century: in other words, ten years after the Inspectors of Lunatics earnestly asked the Board of Control for additional lasting accommodation. I wish I could agree with you that my anticipation will be falsified by the result. Unfortunately, the history of the Board of Control in reference to the Richmond is a long, gloomy tale of delay and indifference. Permit me to give you the latest instance of their tardiness in response to what I might call the persistent clamours of the governors. On the 14th December last the architect of the Board of Control made a report on the temporary buildings at Portrane, in which he wrote: "Block No. 3 will be put in hand immediately after Christmas. This block will contain two wards, one for fifty chronic patients, and the other for thirty-five sick and infirm patients, with the necessary allowance of dormitory space per bed." In the ordinary course of business this block should have been finished early in last March, and this was the time the Board of Control fixed for its completion. In all reasonableness I ask what are your readers to think when I tell them that this shell of a refuge will not be ready for some months yet? Six months ago I ventured to suggest at a meeting of governors that the energy of the Board of Control would not be equal to the putting up this wooden structure in the time specified. One of the governors (Mr. J. Walker) on that occasion angrily assailed me for making such an assumption. What has Mr. Walker got to say now? I do not wish to be an alarmist, but to-day I have ascertained that the number of patients attacked with beri-beri has increased to over forty.—Yours truly,

JOHN CLANCY.

Bellevue, Sutton, 19th July, 1897.