

this report, but we note that it is recommended that the superintendent of each asylum should be responsible, and should act under the direction of a Board having complete control of the whole department. The *Argus* of August 1st reports that a deputation of nearly one hundred waited on Mr. Murray, the chief secretary, whose deplorable procedure throughout this affair has been the cause of so much evil. The deputation included prominent business men, clergymen, medical men, and others of standing and repute. It was introduced by the Lord Mayor, who advocated radical reform. The Bishop of Melbourne and many others generally corroborated the opinions of the official visitors in no restrained fashion. The upshot is that Mr. Murray has undertaken to present a Lunacy Bill to the Colonial Parliament, ungraciously enough, but still unable to withstand the popular demand. So far, so good; but Dr. Beattie Smith is still relegated to a position which he has not merited after so many years of conscientious service.

The Council of the Association have remitted these matters to committees—the maltreatment of Dr. Beattie Smith to a special committee of their number, and the proposed reform in the colonial lunacy law to the Parliamentary Committee. We trust that they will report their findings in due course.

IRISH ASYLUMS CONFERENCE.

An interesting meeting was held on November 25th and 26th in Dublin. It was designated a Conference of Asylum Committees, and consisted of selected members of those bodies, together with the medical superintendents of the district asylums or their deputies. The conference was promoted by the Committee of the Richmond Asylum (asylum for the Dublin district), and met at that institution. The attendance was large, the committees and the superintendents being well represented. Among the delegates from the former bodies were several clergymen. The Irish Local Government Act under which Asylum Committees are constituted permits county

councils to nominate on the committees of their asylums persons who are not members of the County Council, provided these persons do not exceed one fourth of the total number which each council elects.

The subjects which it was proposed to discuss were arranged under the following heads:—(a) Increase of insanity and the reasons thereof, especially those applicable particularly to Ireland; (b) management of the insane with reference to classification; (c) workhouse and criminal insane; (d) necessity for readjusting Government contribution; (e) asylum finance, with special reference to building loans.

The debates were conducted on the whole with considerable cleverness and ability, and with a harmony quite uncommon in Irish public meetings. Whether this was due to the soporific influences of the *genus loci*, to the grave and impersonal nature of the subjects discussed, or to the very marked ability and tact of the Chairman of the Richmond Asylum Committee, Mr. Richard Jones, who presided, it were hard to say. Perhaps all three influences were combined. Mr. Jones led off the proceedings on the first day by a short statement drawing attention to the increasing number of the registered insane, and to some other matters. The increase of officially recognised insanity, pressing everywhere, is certainly very remarkable in Ireland. In the year 1847 there were registered in the island 6180 insane persons, and the whole population was 8,176,124. In 1899, with a population of but 4,576,181, the number of registered insane had risen to 20,304, and at the end of 1902, with a still decreasing population, the number amounted to 22,138. "So they had the strange spectacle of a country steadily diminishing in population called upon to support a steadily increasing number of lunatics." Brief reference was also made from the Chair to certain financial questions.

Under Section A papers were contributed by Drs. O'Neill, of Limerick; Graham, of Belfast; and Drapes, of Enniscorthy. Dr. O'Neill discussed the causation of insanity, dealing with agricultural depression, intemperance, heredity, diet, etc. He thought that the terrible depression of affairs and the emigration of the young and healthy were directly or indirectly responsible for a large portion of the insanity which exists to-day. Dr. Graham, in a vigorous contribution, contended that accumulation, etc., did not account for the increased

number of the insane. The number of first admissions to the Irish asylums had increased in twenty-two years from 1925 to 3173. He discussed the relations of drink and heredity to insanity, arguing that both were scarcely to be regarded as causes, being themselves the index of mental degeneration. In the last forty years Ireland had lost by emigration about 4,000,000 of the mental and physical flower of the country. It was therefore not strange that degeneration should be on the increase. He thought with Professor Pearson that the remedy was "to alter the relative fertility of the good and bad stocks of the community." Dr. Drapes handled the statistics of the subject with his usual ability, deeming intemperance and heredity to be the most important of the causes that could be attacked; he argued that the people ought to be educated on these points and taught self-restraint. Physicians can do little except advise. Efficient action depends upon the people themselves. We understand the proceedings of the conference will be printed fully, and we hope to have an opportunity at a later date of reviewing these papers in more detail than the newspaper reports give us the means of doing now. Considerable discussion followed their delivery, and there was some talk of adopting a resolution embodying canons of advice for public guidance as to avoidance of the exciting causes of mental disease. Eventually, however, this notion was abandoned.

Family Care.—Asylums Laboratory.

At the afternoon meeting of the Conference on the 25th, the management of the insane being under consideration, Dr. Conolly Norman read a paper on "The family care of persons of unsound mind." His views on this subject are well known, so that it is unnecessary to dwell upon them. It may perhaps be observed, however, that he disclaimed any economic motives in recommending family care, which he looked upon as a development of non-restraint. He also pointed out that he has been pressing the subject upon public attention for many years. The Committee of the Richmond Asylum endeavoured about two years ago to induce Government to introduce permissive legislation on the subject. It