

*Some Irish District Asylums.*

*Armagh.*—Overcrowding is here, as in many of the Irish asylums, a very pressing evil. There were, at the end of the year, 506 patients in accommodation suitable for 310 by day and 434 by night. It is interesting to watch how the new authorities—the County Councils—are facing the responsibilities cast on them. In this case, apparently, no steps were being taken to provide the extra accommodation pressed for in the preceding report of the Inspector, who now gives the County Council straight notice that unless action is taken the Board will report to the Lord Lieutenant that sufficient accommodation is not being provided and maintained. One penalty will be the loss of the 4s. grant, the payment of which can only be made on the fulfilment of the condition precedent that accommodation is so provided. The Inspector trusts that the Committee will reconsider their determination to withhold the small allowance made to those attendants who hold the Association's certificate of proficiency.

He also states :

The condition of the new building continues satisfactory, and it is quite remarkable to find there—owing to their good surroundings—an almost total absence of excitement or turmoil amongst the recent and acute cases. Undoubtedly this block cost the ratepayers a considerable sum of money, but no one who is acquainted with the condition of the institution before the erection of the building referred to, can deny how soothing and beneficial is the effect which the good accommodation and improved surroundings have on the patients occupying it.

*Belfast.*—In reviewing his admissions Dr. Graham strongly insists on the fact that insanity is as much a physical disorder as is consumption or smallpox. Of course we all recognise this ; but the lay world, especially those who have some influence over the life conditions of their areas, cannot be told so too often, in the hope that they will look on insanity as a disease that can be restricted by the adoption of preventive measures.

Though this asylum is one of those which has led the way in the great improvements that have been shown in late years, it is paying now the penalty for past omissions and vacillation in the prime duty of authorities—the provision of sufficient accommodation for their insane. The Inspector reports that 101 female epileptics, suicidals, etc., have to be at night in an observation dormitory having 55 beds, so that 46 mattresses have to be laid on the floor each night between the beds. In the corresponding male dormitory things are not quite so bad, 60 patients being accommodated in 46 beds and 14 floor mattresses. There are in the whole asylum at Belfast (excluding Purdysburn, etc.) 741 patients in accommodation provided for 440 ! The Committee is going to build a new asylum on the villa colony system. The general paralytics admitted are about 5 *per cent.* of all admissions, while the alcoholics are about 8 *per cent.*

*Down.*—The fact that in 184 admissions no history could be obtained in six cases only is a good testimony of the industry of Dr. Nolan and his staff in arriving at a conclusion as to causation. He in his last report dealt with “the far-reaching effects *per se* of parental alcoholic

excesses." His observation, unsupported by figures, was subject to criticism, and he now quotes with satisfaction Dr. Wigglesworth's presidential address and Dr. Tredgold's researches in support of his views. One reads with some impatience the strained and pedantic arguments traversing the long experience of Dr. Nolan and, we may say, the whole of asylum superintendents, who have as part of their daily duties to inquire into these matters. We need hardly say that we refer to the prolonged wrangle which started at the Swansea meeting of the British Medical Association.

There are only nineteen patients in excess of standard accommodation, and the Committee have already got plans passed for an extension of 180 beds, which will cost less than £110 each.

Dysentery, which is called the scourge of the asylum, claims 13·8 *per cent.* of all the deaths in the nine years 1894—1902. Considering the care which, as stated above, was taken to get at the probable causation, it is somewhat remarkable that in 184 admissions alcohol could be traced in six cases only; hereditary predisposition appeared in 64. Three male general paralytics were admitted.

We think it right to extract the following printed appreciation from the Inspector's report :

Each succeeding visit of inspection to this asylum satisfies me more completely of the excellent management of the resident medical superintendent, and of the amount of time and thought which he devotes to the efficient and economic working of the institution. The difference between able and careful, and lax and inefficient administration of an asylum means a difference of several thousand pounds a year in the cost of management, and it would be difficult to find a stronger proof of this fact than Downpatrick, where the resident medical superintendent, by formulating for his Committee and the County Council an economical scheme for providing for the chronic and harmless insane of the district, and by the minute attention which he gives to the details of his duties, has effected a substantial saving to the ratepayers.

*Ennis.*—The extension of the asylum, much called for on account of overcrowding, is to be undertaken, and plans have been approved by the authorities. The Inspector reports that the asylum population has only been kept within reasonable limits by transferring to workhouses patients who certainly are not in many instances suitable for treatment in these institutions. Happy Clare has no general paralytics, and only about 3 *per cent.* of alcoholics in the admissions.

*Limerick.*—Dr. O'Neill reports most favourably on the introduction of weaving looms into the male wards, and hopes to see some instituted on the female side. A satisfactory tweed is made for the patients' clothing. He calls on his Committee at once to provide more accommodation, and strongly urges them to extend the asylum in preference to building a new auxiliary asylum or reconstructing workhouses, these being the three modes of providing further accommodation allowed by the Act. The Inspector enforces the demand by notifying the Committee of the Board's intention to act as stated above if steps are not taken. The Inspector adverts to the fact that he found the temperature in the male hospital to be 48 degrees only, and this in mid-winter. There were no general paralytics in the asylum, and alcohol only

accounted for about 7 *per cent.* of the admissions. In 30 *per cent.* of all admitted hereditary predisposition was traced.

*Some English Hospitals.*

*Barnwood.*—We are most glad to read that out of the favourable surplus of income no less a sum than £4671 has been appropriated to increasing the Pension Fund, which now stands at the value of £17,000. Nothing can react more strongly on the care of the patients and the general progress of the institution than such a pledge to the future. The rating authorities have suddenly raised the ratable value of the hospital from £807 to £2030. Remonstrance succeeded in reducing the latter sum to £1800, with which, of course, the Committee are not satisfied, and they will appeal again. The extra amount of rates thus imposed would probably suffice to keep two patients. Dr. Soutar mentions a case which recovered after five years' illness. No improvement was seen till many stumps had been extracted and replaced by artificial teeth. After that she never looked back.

*Bethlem.*—The number of admissions exceeded the average population, and no less than 43 *per cent.* of those admissions were on urgency orders. This was a substantial increase on the 28 *per cent.* of the preceding years, and resulted from the unusual number of acute cases requiring immediate treatment. Forty-five voluntary patients were admitted, and in the course of the year twenty of this class had to be certified. Rather more than one third of the admissions had been previously insane, and just about two thirds were recent cases of active melancholia and mania.

*Wonford House.*—It is satisfactory to read that the Committee can report their being satisfied that the institution is in a thoroughly sound condition, and that steady progress is being made. Of the 131 patients 47 paid less than the actual cost of maintenance, while 16 others paid less than the average income. The benefaction thus rendered is termed "assistance," which is far pleasanter and truer than "charity." The latter rather implies active monetary goodwill on the part of someone, which is not exercisable in unendowed hospitals, since the means of assistance can only be found in the excess payments of richer patients. The recovery rate was unfortunately lower than it had been for thirty years, but, as Dr. Deas points out, only thirteen out of the thirty-seven presented any hope of recovery on admission. Three out of twenty male admissions were attributed to sexual excess, but only one to alcoholic intemperance.

*Some Scotch District Asylums.*

*Inverness.*—On the advice of Dr. Keay the District Board made a determined effort in the direction of "boarding out," with the result that sixty-five were removed in last year. Only seven were returned as unsuitable. The inconveniences of having one hall for eating, recreation, and public worship are commented on, and it is somewhat surprising to read that two halls were originally provided for the latter purposes, but