

of average residence, is a light one for a period of active movements and high recovery rate.

There are no means of making a financial comparison between various periods in the history of the hospital, though, from a table given by the Committee, it is seen that the income in 1900 was not far short of three times that of 1871. There is no question that now the institution is in a highly satisfactory position. It has a fair annual credit margin, which, while not so brilliant as may be found in similar establishments, is likely to be constant, seeing that a moderate average charge is eaten up by judicious expenditure to that extent which will leave profit enough to carry on the work comfortably and no more. The Committee and Dr. Deas are to be heartily congratulated on the results shown in the 1900 report.

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*Recovery Rate.*

The recovery rate, according to the Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy, was 38·78 per cent. on the admissions during the quinquennium ending 1877, and 38·76 on that ending 1897, so that by this method of estimation the results of treatment remain practically stationary.

The proportions of recoveries, when calculated on the daily average number of patients resident for the same periods, are 11·54 and 9·99 per cent. respectively, showing a very considerable decrease.

The public, if impressed by these last figures, will probably begin to ask whether this is a satisfactory result for all the outlay and efforts that have been made in the treatment of insanity of late years. These statistics have even given one of our medical contemporaries a fit of the blues in regard to the alienistic outlook.

The report, fortunately, furnishes the *reductio ad absurdum* of these calculations, one asylum having a recovery rate for the year of 100 per cent. on the admissions, and a proportion of 1 on the total number under treatment. How is it possible for an asylum to be so successful and yet such an utter failure?

Statistics over prolonged periods show that of admissions to asylums between 30 and 40 per cent. do recover, and it is therefore certain that any statement regarding a recovery rate

of 10 per cent. or thereabouts is misleading. The first calculation, on the admissions, approximates roughly with the facts ; in the second calculation the percentage rises or falls with the duration under treatment, and is relative to this rather than to the recovery rate.

It is a question, therefore, whether it would not be better to reverse the statement of this table, and state the proportion (per cent.) of unrecovered cases to the total number under treatment. This would draw attention to the proportion of uncured cases remaining under care, and would not be mistaken by the public or any one else as a "recovery rate," productive of popular panic.

Of course the nearest approximation to a true recovery rate is afforded by Table IIA as designed by the Medico-Psychological Association. Unfortunately it is not compiled by all the asylums of the kingdom ; but it would be interesting to work out such results as are trustworthy and obtainable from the statistics of such institutions as publish Table IIA. Here is an opportunity for discovering the real recovery rate in selected districts so far as asylum statistics can show it.

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*Certifying Insanity by Contract.*

Boards of Guardians (we learn from the *British Medical Journal* of 24th August) are beginning to insert in the rules of the resident medical officers of Poor Law infirmaries a clause to the effect that Lunacy Certificates shall be signed without fee. Lunacy certification, in fact, is reduced to the same level with tooth drawing.

Magistrates under such an arrangement will probably find themselves handicapped in fulfilling the instruction to call to their aid *a* medical man ; it is *the* medical contractor whose feeless assistance they will be expected to invoke.

The responsibility of the Guardians as employers of the contract certifier is an important point. If the contracting certifier commits a misdemeanour in certifying, will not the Guardians be responsible and punishable? The indictment of a whole board for misdemeanour would not be devoid of interest.