

gator, which tended to demonstrate that tubercle was present in 40 *per cent.* of all deaths. The fact that the phthisis rate did vary was a very important one, as further showing the unreliability of statistics unless compiled by one authority. In one of the asylums of London—although he returned his own phthisis rate at something like 14 *per cent.*—the rate was returned as 4 *per cent.*; but there was a special pathologist at Claybury, upon whose statistics reliance could be placed, and who did the *post-mortem* examinations. What Dr. Lloyd Andriezen said about the Manhattan establishment he was already aware of, and showed the pictures of the tent treatment of tuberculosis at the recent Congress of the Sanitary Institute in London. Dr. A. E. Macdonald in America had found this method an economical and practical one of getting fresh air, and it bore out, as Dr. Weatherly said, that it was not the warm air which suited those patients, because they lost weight in the summer and gained it in the winter, July being the month of greatest loss of weight. Camp life caused a definite gain in weight in these phthisical cases. Dr. Robertson referred to a similar experience to his own, and also with regard to heating by means of the abominable Plenum system. He had held lighted tapers to see how the air was moving in the extracting shafts and found the current to be in the opposite direction, so that, instead of exhausting, these shafts were supplying foul air into the wards. One never knew which way the air-currents in these channels and shafts were going to act. It was so bad that he recommended that this method of heating should be cut off entirely in many wards in Claybury, and heating by radiators in the wards with cold air coming in direct from outside over the radiators substituted in its place, which answered admirably, providing there was cross-ventilation. As to bars to windows and a sash to throw up, the Colney Hatch fire was a desperate fright, and now every bar had been removed, and therefore the sash only opened up for the regulation five inches, instead of, as formerly, the whole way up.

The Necessity for State Interference on behalf of the Imbecile. By F. E. RAINSFORD, M.D., Medical Superintendent, Stewart Institution.

THE few remarks which I have to make in dealing with the subject of this paper are only fragmentary, and are intended merely to direct your attention to the subject, and to elicit a resolution embodying your views which can be sent on to the authorities responsible for the government of Ireland.

The question of what can be done for the imbecile is one that is slowly forcing its way into public notice. For a long time the public regarded this question in an apathetic manner and either remained in complete ignorance of the existence of such a class of mentally defective persons, or else remained satisfied that they got all the care they needed. I am glad to think that gradually a more enlightened and liberal view is being taken, and it is not Utopian to think that eventually the public will be induced to see that this is a problem that must be solved.

In the United Kingdom, at present, there are now various institutions established for the care and treatment of imbeciles, but all of these are (with certain exceptions, to be afterwards mentioned) maintained by charitable donations, and cases to be admitted have to enlist such an amount of interest and sympathy as is often quite impossible to people in poor and humble circumstances.

To prevent the overcrowding that must necessarily ensue in course of years, these institutions elect all cases for a fixed period of years, at the expiration of which the cases, unless improved, have to be removed by their friends, and in the majority of cases drift to the district workhouse or county asylum, so that the latter end of the patient is too often worse than the first.

These institutions, therefore, while doing admirable work, must necessarily be quite incapable of dealing with the constantly increasing number of mental defectives which the stress and vices of modern life are constantly producing.

Briefly, and in a very imperfect way, to outline what might be done for this large class, for whom nobody cares, is the object of this paper.

I think I can in no better way set forth what might be done than by very shortly recounting how the Metropolitan Asylums' Board deals with this class in the metropolitan district of London.

This Board is practically the only public body in the United Kingdom that has made an effort to remove from the workhouses and other unsuitable surroundings the chronic, harmless lunatics and imbeciles. As their courteous Chief Clerk succinctly states in a letter recently received from him: "The usual insane patients who come under the Board's control are such harmless, chronic lunatics and imbeciles as could be lawfully retained in a workhouse. They come to the Board on the order of the various Metropolitan Boards of Guardians, and the cost of maintenance of each patient is charged to one or other of these Boards. To accomplish this work the Board has now under its control four large institutions, each under the management of a medical superintendent, and a smaller one for about 150 patients under the control of a trained matron and schoolmistress with a visiting medical officer, and aided by a specialist in imbecility. In these four large asylums there are now roughly about 7000 inmates. In the earlier stages

of their inception the managers found their work greatly hampered by the constant influx of epileptic and helpless imbeciles, who crowded out the younger and more improvable cases, interfered with the educational work, and imposed onerous and exacting duties on the staff. To remedy this they devised a scheme whereby a small institution was started for 150 children of either sex of the improvable class, drafted from the large institutions, officered by a matron and a visiting medical officer, and advised by a specialist in imbecility. This is reported to have given very satisfactory results, which would probably have been better had the accommodation been more extensive, and had it not been difficult to retain the males after they had reached the age of puberty." It is added, however, "the training arrangements including kindergarten and school work, and industrial training in basket-making, boot-making, tailoring, laundry work, and ordinary household occupations, including cooking, have met with most encouraging success."

To further extend this excellent work the managers have recently published an extended scheme whereby, at Darenth Schools and Asylum a threefold arrangement shall prevail, viz. a school for training improvable juvenile imbeciles, an industrial colony where patients can be accommodated and employed at remunerative industry on their transfer from the Schools, and an asylum (pavilion) for the helpless and unimprovable cases. To further help the difficult work of classification all imbeciles are, in the first instance, admitted to the new asylum at Tooting Bec, are there kept a short time under observation, and are then distributed to whatever institution is thought to be best fitted to receive them. The industries proposed to be taught at Darenth Schools are carpentering, firewood-chopping (already a remunerative industry), plumbing, painting, basket-making, boot-making, tailoring, brush-making, tinsmith work, upholstering, baking and garden work. These for the males, and for the females laundry and kitchen work, needlework, etc., all, of course, supplemented by careful school teaching and kindergarten. This is no doubt a formidable list, and the managers have set a high ideal before them to strive after. Time alone will tell how far their views are being justified by results. One must, at any rate, give them credit for an honest and generous attempt to grapple with a difficult problem.

I make no apology for thus prefacing my remarks, as what I

have indicated as having been done by a public board is, to a great extent, a guide as to what might be done on a larger scale by the State. Let it be remembered that there is in Scotland but one institution exclusively devoted to the care and training of imbeciles, that at Larbert—in Ireland but one also, the Stewart Institution—with these exceptions the action taken by the Metropolitan Asylums' Board is the first organised effort by a public body in the direction of helping to develop the dormant faculties and mental activities of the feeble-minded.

It is only right to mention, however, that some of the county asylums have established annexes to their buildings for the reception of the younger imbeciles, but this movement, while admirable in many ways, does not, to my mind, at all deal with the difficult problem.

As regards our own country, in which there is said to be 8000 imbeciles, we must, in the first place, remember that we cannot hope for the same results dependent on a large pecuniary outlay, nor, on the other hand, have we to face the problem of the constant large increase in the admissions necessitating frequent changes of methods and increased buildings. Yet I think you will agree with me in saying that something more might be done than is done at present, and it is high time that some organised effort should be made to impress, either on our county councils or on the various members of Parliament, that this is a work that should be done, that would yield remunerative results, and would tend to lessen crime and increase morality. The imbecile at large is a danger to the State, and it is, therefore, in the interest of the State to see that he is placed where he can do the minimum of harm and receive the maximum of benefit. I am no optimist in my conception of the amount of valuable work to be got out of an imbecile, but I am sanguine enough to think that a good deal more can be got than one might at first imagine, and that as one's experience in their training was widened the results would be correspondingly better. At present, in Ireland, the Stewart Institution is the only institution where anything has been attempted in this direction. But there, while encouraging results have been attained, they fall very far short of my ideal. For this there are many explanations. Smallness of the number of the inmates (average about 100), necessitated by financial considerations, the institution having nothing to

depend upon but the charity of its friends; difficulty of getting cases suitable for training; the election difficulty; the labour involved in getting a case elected not always compensating for the loss of service of a hopeful inmate; the expense in starting industries in which, owing to the paucity of the numbers who could be employed, the results would be unremunerative. Yet, despite all these drawbacks, a good deal has been done in the way of teaching habits of order, cleanliness, and method, domestic work, outdoor occupation, mat making, and tweed weaving, and in not a few cases inmates have been so improved that at, or before, the expiration of their period of election they have become able to be useful in the home or to earn their living at some simple occupation.

Now, the solution of the difficulty is by no means easy, and I am desirous, in anything I may suggest, rather to elicit your opinions than dogmatically to put forth my own. Yet, bearing in mind what, though imperfectly, has been done by a public body, could not something similar be done in Ireland? Suppose there were two administrative boards for Ireland, for the north and south respectively, consisting of delegates from the various county and rural district councils, the county members of Parliament, etc., who would get a building for each district and receive from the workhouses and county asylums all the imbeciles under their care, together with such harmless chronic lunatics as are at present in the workhouses, and whose care there is a blot on our civilisation, the cost of maintenance to be paid *pro rata* by the various boards to which the patients would be chargeable, supplemented by a Government grant per head. Necessarily, the initial expense of acquiring suitable building and a sufficiency of land attached would be large, and I think the duty of providing this ought to lie on the State, as it would derive the greatest benefit by the removal of the unfit out of public life. I understand that there are in Ireland several disused workhouses, any one of which might, with the expenditure of money, be made suitable for the purpose required. One essential condition should be that there should be a good-sized farm attached, as, in this class of work, I believe the greater proportion of the inmates would find an agreeable and suitable employment. This building thus acquired should, I think, be divided into two sections, viz., a school and an industrial colony. The former would

take all inmates say from six to sixteen years of age, the other division would provide occupation for those of maturer years. Such an institution should, as far as possible, be divested of all that pertains to the ideal of a county asylum, and should be looked upon as an industrial training school and colony for the feeble-minded.

The first efforts would be directed to the children, who would be trained in habits of cleanliness, discipline, order, and obedience; in fact, civilised. They would then enter into the school division, and be taught by trained instructors first in kindergarten, and later in the ordinary school subjects. As they grew up they would be trained in such industries as they were judged most likely to acquire skill in, and for as many hours as was suitable to their health. Later, when their school days were over, they would be retained in the industrial colony working at various industries, and, we will hope, in the majority of cases remuneratively.

I confess I am met with the difficulty as to how to deal with the helpless, unimprovable, and epileptic imbeciles who would tend in time to crowd up the institution and hamper its educational aims. This difficulty might be met by sending all imbeciles, in the first instance, to the central institution, and, after treatment there, those found unsuitable might either be transferred back to their local workhouses or to places where special accommodation was provided for such in each province. This special accommodation could be provided by making use of some of the disused workhouses already alluded to, and could be cheaply maintained and officered as no elaborate equipment would be needed.

I freely grant that a scheme such as I have thus outlined is Utopian, at least as far as Ireland is concerned, still by formulating a high ideal one may attain to something, which, though very far short of that ideal, may yet be a very respectable result.

It is, however, generally acknowledged that something should be done to remove the younger imbeciles from the demoralising environment of the asylum and workhouse, where they get no chance of developing any little powers they may possess, and sink into a pitiable state of physical and mental degeneracy. I feel that the plan I propose is one open to many objections, but I hope at least that in all I have written

there is something that will elicit discussion, and that more experienced and wiser heads than mine may, by their views, help us to formulate a scheme which we may put before the public as something to strive after.

A definite well-thought-out scheme set forth by an association such as ours should have considerable value in influencing public opinion.

I think myself the main objection to any well-furnished scheme will be on the score of the cost. Ours is a poor country, and local taxation is already a heavy burden, and to suggest anything which will tend to add to this burden is to court disaster. If, however, our paternal Government could be got to see that this is a question which interests them, and doing so would come forward with a promise of financial assistance, something might be done. If the initial cost of building and equipment was met by the Government, and in addition a grant per head, I think the local authorities might very reasonably pay the difference. The withdrawal of a large number of cases from the county asylums and work-houses will relieve the local rates to a small extent so that the increased cost of the imbecile in the suggested institution will be more apparent than real. If the local authorities are to be represented on the Board of Management they must reasonably expect to contribute something towards the upkeep. The expenses would, no doubt, be higher than in a county asylum, and it would be a great mistake to run such an undertaking too economically. The officers, male and female, should be carefully selected and well paid. The various craft instructors should be persons of the highest intelligence, experienced in instructing mentally deficient persons, and they should be well paid for their work. Then at first there would probably be little or no profit from the industries, but I have every confidence that in time as the instructors got more experience and the pupils more skill their work would become of value to the institution.

DISCUSSION

At the Meeting of the Irish Division.

Dr. MCKENNA thought that many imbeciles at present in asylums could be made very useful if trained in youth. Such patients could be taught to do farm work, and even industrial work in an automatic fashion. He was of opinion that 50 or 60 *per cent.* of the imbeciles of Irish asylums could be so trained.

Dr. NORMAN said that the treatment of imbeciles was more than usually difficult

in Ireland, owing to the poverty and political unsettlement of the country, and he was afraid that it would never pay any politician to take up their cause. He was in thorough sympathy with the greater part of what Dr. Rainsford had said. Many idiots repaid teaching, and he could think of six such cases in his own asylum; *e.g.* he had been much surprised lately to find that a hydrocephalic idiot regarded as hopeless had been taught to read by another patient. Another imbecile, who was aphasic and could not be taught to read and write, had learnt to reel wool off bobbins and to sort yarn, and possessed a good deal of intelligence. Such cases were of constant occurrence, and he agreed with the last speaker that 50 or 60 *per cent.* could be taught at least something, while a considerable number could be made wage-earners, and a considerable number more self-supporting. It was disgraceful that there should be only one small institution for idiots in the country, and that such patients should go without all treatment simply because cures could not be reported.

Dr. LEEPER had had experience of such cases in workhouses, and thought they should be taken over by the Government. He considered that a fruitful source of insanity was the production of a numerous progeny by high-grade female imbeciles, who ought to be permanently detained, as was done at the Leavesden Asylum. It was a question whether the patients should be kept for life in imbecile colonies, or should be transferred to asylums at a certain age.

Dr. FITZGERALD concurred as to the necessity for doing something in Ireland for the imbeciles, especially pauper imbeciles, large numbers of whom had been admitted to Carlow Asylum, where little could be done for them. No persons of unsound mind should be in workhouses. He knew of a family that for three generations had produced illegitimate children, and thought this sort of thing would continue if such patients were left in unions. He believed it to be the duty of the Government to provide for imbeciles, but he did not think that imbecile institutions could be worked more cheaply than asylums, nor that the asylums would be relieved by them, as there were patients in the workhouses waiting for admission.

Dr. NORMAN wished to add, with the permission of the meeting, that an Act had been passed thirty years ago enabling an asylum for imbeciles to be erected in each province of Ireland. If this could be revived it might meet the case.

Dr. RAINSFORD thanked the members for their reception of his paper, and said that imbecile patients could be taught to do very well *one* class of work automatically, which raised the hope that with proper training much could be attained. Some institution was to be desired where patients could be sent on a simple order, not certified. It was unfortunate that an imbecile might after a time have to be sent home or to the workhouse, and he endorsed the views expressed as to the danger of having female imbeciles at large. He did not think that institutions for imbeciles could be worked economically, as there must be well-paid officers and good food. There might be a small lessening of expense to the district asylums, but it would probably not be much.

Dr. NORMAN then proposed, and Dr. FITZGERALD seconded, a resolution that a committee be appointed, consisting of Drs. Fitzgerald, Rainsford, Leeper, and Dawson, to draw up a resolution in accordance with the views expressed, to be forwarded to the Inspectors for transmission to the Lord Lieutenant. This was unanimously passed, Dr. Norman's name being added to the committee.
