

IRISH DIVISION.

SUMMER MEETING.

THE summer meeting of the division was held at the District Asylum, Armagh, by the kindness of Dr. Lawless, on Tuesday, July 5th.

Before the meeting the members were taken round the asylum, and were much impressed by the fine new hospital not long since added to the institution. Some cases were also demonstrated. The members were then entertained at luncheon by Dr. Lawless.

Dr. Lawless occupied the chair at the meeting, and there were also present Drs. M. J. Nolan, J. Moloney, R. R. Leeper, C. Norman, S. Graham, W. Graham, Dora Allman, J. Mills, and W. R. Dawson (Hon. Sec). Letters expressing regret at inability to attend were notified from the General Secretary, Dr. Oscar Woods, and Dr. Hetherington.

On the proposal of Dr. NORMAN, seconded by Dr. MOLONEY, the minutes of the previous meeting were taken as read and signed.

The SECRETARY pointed out that the date fixed for the Spring Meeting of 1905 would be very late, owing to the lateness of Easter, but it was decided not to change it.

PERIOD OF TRAINING FOR NURSES AND ATTENDANTS.

A communication on the above subject from the General Secretary having been read, it was unanimously resolved, after a short discussion, on the proposal of Dr. MILLS, seconded by Dr. NORMAN:—"That the period of training of nurses and attendants be prolonged from two to three years, provided that one of them may be taken in a general hospital."

COMMUNICATIONS.

1. The CHAIRMAN read some "Historical Notes on Armagh District Asylum." This asylum is one of the oldest in Ireland, having been completed in December, 1824, though the first patients were not admitted until July, 1825, seventy-nine years ago. It was built at a time when the humane treatment of the insane was in its infancy; in fact, it is stated in one of the reports that the manager, a Mr. Jackson, was one of the first in Ireland to adopt what is understood as the humane treatment of the insane. At the time the asylum was built the idea which seemed to animate its designers was to make it as much on the lines of a prison as possible, and this idea is not unnatural, seeing that the lunatics who committed offences, or who were dangerous, were confined in the prisons before district asylums were built, and even afterwards, when the district asylums were full, lunatics in the prisons had to await the occurrence of vacancies before they were transferred to the asylum, so that it would seem to be not unnatural that asylums should be built on somewhat prison-like lines; evidence of this prison-like appearance is abundant in the old portion of the building in the shape of the vaulted ceilings of the single rooms and corridors of the ground floor, the small size and height of the windows, though these have since been enlarged, and the very strong doors made of thick timber supplemented with iron bars. These all suggested to the unfortunate inmate the idea of hopeless incarceration rather than that of relief, rest, and cure. There is a curious restriction as to the size of lunatic asylums in that they were to be built for not less than 100 nor for more than 150 patients. Some idea as to the comparatively small number of insane at this time may be gathered from the fact that this asylum, built to accommodate 104, was intended to be sufficient provision for a very large district comprising no less than five counties, viz. Armagh, Monaghan, Tyrone, Fermanagh, and Donegal. In 1820 the asylum at Derry was finished, and six patients belonging to the counties of Tyrone and Donegal were transferred there. After this, in 1853, the asylum at Omagh was built, which took the county Fermanagh from this district, thus relieving the congestion that was very much felt. At this time the county Cavan was added to the

district, so that from 1853 until 1869 this asylum district consisted of Armagh, Monaghan, and Cavan, in which latter year the Monaghan Asylum was completed, and the patients who were here belonging to these counties of Monaghan and Cavan were transferred to the new asylum, leaving 142 patients in the asylum who belonged to the county Armagh. I should have mentioned earlier that when this asylum was built to accommodate 104 patients the proportion for each county was, Armagh 20, Monaghan 18, Tyrone 27, Fermanagh 13, and Donegal 26. These figures sound somewhat absurd when we think of the numbers of the insane that are now accommodated from these counties. The accommodation of this asylum remained at 104 until the year 1864, when certain additions were made in consequence of considerable increase in numbers, which numbers had been steadily increasing, and many patients had to remain in the jails because there were no vacancies in the asylum, and it could not be further overcrowded. These additions raised the accommodation to 162, at which figure it remained until 1880, when further additions were made, which were completed in 1885, by which the accommodation was raised to 304. In the year 1890 the asylum was again greatly overcrowded, and the question of providing further accommodation had again to be considered; it was then decided not to make any more additions to the existing building, but to build a completely detached hospital on the most modern lines to accommodate from 60 to 70 patients. It was soon found, however, that this number would not be sufficient, so it was eventually decided to build for 150 or 160 patients. This building was completed and occupied in 1898; our accommodation was thus raised to 434, but when I mention that there are now over 500 patients in the asylum, and that the daily average number resident for last year was 511, it will be seen that history is again repeating itself, and that eventually, and at no very distant date, further building will be necessary in order to accommodate the ever-increasing number of lunatics. In this connection it may be of interest to give some statistics relating to the growth of the numbers of the insane in this asylum and this county. Starting from the year 1870, in which year the district consisted of the county Armagh alone, there were in the asylum on the 31st December 142 inmates. The population in 1871 being 179,620, the ratio of insane to general population being 79'21 per 100,000. At the next census, in 1881, the population had decreased by 11,083, and was 168,177, while the number resident on the previous 31st December was 196. During the next decade the population had further decreased by 24,888, and stood at the reduced figure of 143,289, while the number resident in the asylum on the previous 31st December had increased to 326, a ratio of 227'51 per 100,000. At the last census, in 1901, the population was reduced to 123,392, being 19,897 less than 1891, the number of patients resident on the previous 31st December having risen to 496, representing a ratio of 380'08 of insane per 100,000 of general population. In order to bring the figures down to 1903, I have taken the population as given for 1901, and the proportionate decrease based on the decrease of thirty years, and find that the estimated population in 1903 was 117,806. The average number resident in the asylum for that year was, as I have said, 511, which gives a ratio of 433'76 per 100,000. These figures are, of course, only approximate, but nevertheless they show beyond question that there is a diminishing population and a largely increasing number of insane in one comparatively small county, though not by any means confined to it, for unfortunately it is the same sad story all over Ireland. From these figures we see that in a little more than one generation the population has decreased by 61,455, while the numbers of insane resident in the asylum have increased from 142 to 511. What the figures will be at the end of another generation it is not easy to prophesy, but it is fairly certain that the number of lunatics will not markedly diminish, and that the population will materially increase is not very probable, so that the housing and treatment of the insane will become in the future, what people are beginning to feel it at present, a very difficult and acute social problem.

From time to time structural improvements have been made in this asylum. The windows have been, as already mentioned, enlarged, though they are not as large as in more modern buildings, several single rooms have been converted into dormitories, but lately this has been done on a large scale in one of the corridors which contained twelve single rooms. Nine of these were taken away, and the space thus obtained with the added space of the corridor has given a very fine dormitory

capable of containing twenty-six beds. This asylum is still badly off for dayroom accommodation, there being only dayroom space for 310. The committee contemplate the gutting out of a portion of two of the older corridors, and converting the space thus obtained into a dayroom on the ground floor and a dormitory above. It is always or nearly always unsatisfactory to tinker at an old building, for when additional accommodation is provided the other administrative departments—dining-room, kitchen, laundry, scullery, baths, and lavatories—are frequently found inadequate to the increased demand on them, and entail difficulties in efficient administration.

At the time the asylum was opened it was placed in charge of a lay manager who, with his wife as matron, continued in office until 1859, when Dr. McKinstry was appointed; he was succeeded by Dr. W. Graham in 1886, who held office until August, 1897, at which time I was appointed superintendent.

Dr. MOLONEY asked whether the asylum land had been extended, and whether the patients came mostly from the agricultural class.

Dr. LAWLESS replied in the affirmative to both questions.

Dr. CONOLLY NORMAN said that the model at first followed in asylum construction was, as a general rule, that of the monastery, owing to the fact that Bethlem had originally been an establishment of that kind. Later a worse one was adopted, that of a barrack, which came to be regarded as the typical plan for asylums. Happily we had specimens of a more advanced style in the hospital attached to Armagh Asylum, and in the Belfast Asylum at Purdysburn. He thought, however, that the difficulty of providing for the insane would have to be met by the adoption of the system of family care, in order to relieve the asylums, as the numbers of the insane were increasing in Ireland, whereas population and wealth were diminishing.

Dr. MILLS said that he had been struck by the enormous increase in the numbers of senile demented, idiots, and epileptics in the period covered by Dr. Lawless' figures. He thought that this was due to the absolute intolerance in the domestic circle of the slightest mental affliction. The village idiot was no longer seen, nor the senile demented; they were now sent to asylums; and the real increase consisted, not of acute cases, which were fewer than ten years ago, but of cases of the class which could be treated on the system mentioned by Dr. Norman, *i. e.* the relatives should be paid a small subsidy for keeping them at home.

Dr. LAWLESS, in replying, said that their first admissions had definitely increased year by year, and that their largest class consisted of adolescent cases.

2. Dr. W. GRAHAM brought forward a communication entitled "Science and a Future Life." This paper will appear in the next number of the JOURNAL.

A unanimous vote of thanks was passed to Dr. Lawless for his kind hospitality, and he having responded, the proceedings terminated.

BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

SECTION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL MEDICINE.—ANNUAL MEETING, OXFORD, 1904.

Reported by R. L. LANGDON DOWN, M.B.

President.—Charles Arthur Mercier, M.B. Lond.

Vice-Presidents.—Ernest W. White, M.B.; James Neil, M.D.; T. Seymour Tuke, M.B.

Hon. Secretaries.—W. Ford Robertson, M.D.; R. L. Langdon Down, M.B.

The section was very well attended, and the papers read were fully discussed.

CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY AND DEGENERACY.

The proceedings opened with a discussion of this subject, which was introduced by the President of the section. In prefacing his remarks Dr. Mercier referred to the long-standing difference in this matter between the legal and medical professions, and claimed that if each side would endeavour to understand the attitude of the other there was no essential antagonism, and the time was ripe