

8. Asylum Reports, 1902.

Some English County and Borough Asylums.

Carmarthen.—The Committee of Visitors report that it has under consideration the establishment of a pension scheme. The Commissioners note that the asylum is overcrowded, which will possibly explain in part the abnormally high death-rate from phthisis. This asylum lays itself out to receive private patients, and at the time of report had forty-two of these, paying from 10s. to £2 2s. per week. There is a proposal to acquire fresh land and build accommodation for them. Dr. Goodall again brings before his Committee the benefits of boarding out patients as a means of obviating the necessity for some of the fresh building which will otherwise soon be required.

Derby County.—The following is a point :

C. R.— was brought to the asylum at 2.55 on July 17th. While sitting in the reception room in charge of the men who brought him, and before being formally “admitted,” he died. At the inquest the following verdict was found:—“Syncope brought on by acute maniacal exhaustion.” I was instructed by the Lunacy Commissioners that the case was not to be considered as an “admission,” and that the death was not one of a patient in the asylum. The body was therefore removed by the Chesterfield Union authorities and buried in the Mickleover Churchyard.

The causation by alcoholism among males was 34 in 112 admissions.

It may be recalled here that during the year the Association, through the hospitable kindness of Dr. Legge and the Committee, had an opportunity of making an instructive and pleasant inspection of Mickleover.

Derby Borough.—Of the Brabazon scheme Dr. Macphail writes :

It has certainly had the effect of brightening the lives of many of the patients, and has helped in the cure of not a few. The real interest taken by the ladies in their pupils is not confined to the two hours spent weekly at the asylum in teaching the patients rug-making, basket-weaving, chair-caning, netting, knitting, and different kinds of fancy work, but shows itself in various ways; it extends to visiting patients at their houses after their discharge, and in some instances helping them to obtain suitable employment. We are the first English asylum to give this scheme a trial, and as our first year was tentative we have not attempted too much. Hitherto the classes have been composed of female patients only, but we hope shortly to start suitable employment for the men. Financially the scheme is self-supporting, and although you as a Committee kindly undertook to be responsible for any loss sustained in the first year, no assistance has been necessary, and we have a small balance in hand which will be spent in giving a treat to the patients.

The system of instruction is excellent, as we have before pointed out in relation to some of the Scotch asylums, but the extension of the teachers' interest to visitation and help outside the asylum is worthy of all praise. More than anything else it will help to break down the invidious and prejudicial difference in the light in which the public regard mental and general disorders.

The alcoholic causation in the males was even higher in the borough than in the county, being 15 out of 41 admissions.

Dorsetshire.—Dr. Macdonald renews an old protest, and suggests that in some cases the greater comforts of the asylum have a determining influence in restoring quiet orderliness, which was absent in the workhouse :

With reference to the aged cases admitted, it would seem very desirable that patients who are only in need of ordinary attention and nursing might be cared for at home or in the workhouse infirmaries. It sometimes happens that the only indication of insanity in these cases is a restlessness by night, which, while annoying to others, is not much proof of insanity.

It is noteworthy that while three general paralytics were admitted, and five died, nine remained at the end of the year.

Glamorgan.—The Committee report :

A few cases of scarlet fever occurred in the spring, but as they were at once isolated the disease did not spread. To enable the Committee to refuse admission to cases of infectious diseases, or to persons coming from districts where such prevail, they have adopted as a regulation, in accordance with Section 275 of the Lunacy Act, 1890, sub-clause 5, the power there granted them to exclude such cases and persons.

The general paralytic admissions included 16 females in a total of 51. Sexual intemperance accounted for two male and nine female admissions, while venereal disease was responsible for four—all males.

Gloucester.—In dealing with the influence of heredity Dr. Craddock gives the following instance of wilful neglect of ordinary caution. But then it always is the madman who does mad things.

A man who had been an inmate here more than once, on the last occasion for some five or six years, unexpectedly began to improve, and at length was so much better that his relatives wished to give him a trial at home. I willingly assented, and he was in due course discharged. Within a few months we heard he was engaged to be married, and he actually was married to, it will hardly be credited, the daughter of a woman who has been here for years, and is never likely to be anywhere else.

Kesteven.—The opening of the new asylum at Quarrington on June 20th, 1902, is recorded in this report, and the arrangements made by Dr. Ewan for the transfer of the patients from Grantham are warmly appreciated by the Committee. One of the wards has been set apart for the reception of private patients at the lowest remunerative rate of payment. The Committee have been obliged to appeal against the assessment, the local authorities having rated the institution on a much higher basis than other asylums in the country. The cost per head, exclusive of site and equipment, works out at £310 for 420 patients, and when the whole accommodation for 600 is completed the cost will probably come down to £265.

London (City).—This institution continues to receive a high proportion of male general paralytics, about 13 *per cent.* of the admissions being due to that disease. No less than eight foreign nations have at least one representative in the asylum. Dr. White attributes an abnormally low recovery rate for the year to the fact that he had received a large number of chronics as fresh cases and not as transfers.

Monmouth.—We can again point out some unusual facts concerning general paralytics in this asylum. The new cases numbered nine, the deaths twelve, while the remainder at the end of the year was twenty-five. This state of affairs points to one of two conclusions—either that the mental condition was of the quiet form which wastes but slowly the small balance of vitality, or that the treatment was more than usually successful in limiting this waste.

Nottingham (City).—The following note by Dr. Powell will commend itself to many who do not accept the theory of syphilis being necessary to the causation of general paralysis :

With regard to the causes of insanity in the cases admitted, intemperance in drink heads the list, and it is noted that the cases from this cause are practically in equal proportions of the sexes, which is quite unusual in the general statistics of the country. Side by side with this fact, it is of interest to find that a much larger proportion of females to males are found to be suffering from general paralysis here than in other places, which leads to the belief that there is a closer connection between drink and this disease, as cause and effect, than is now admitted.

Curiously enough, however, the causation of insanity by venereal disease among the females is abnormally high in comparison with the three-year averages of the Commissioners. The figures are as follows :

	Males.	Females.	Total.
Nottingham City Asylum—Admissions . .	89	95	184
" " " General paralytics	12	6	18
" " " Alcoholics . .	14	12	26
" " " Venereal cases . .	2	3	5

The Commissioners' proportions (57th report) on the admissions are for pauper cases :

	Males.	Females.
General paralytics	11·2	2·4
Alcoholics . .	23·8	9·7
Venereal cases .	3·1	0·8

Salop and Montgomery.—The following is the appreciation of the late Dr. Strange by the Visiting Committee :

The Visitors deeply regret to report the death of the medical superintendent of the asylum, Dr. Arthur Strange, which occurred on May 11th last. He was appointed superintendent on March 18th, 1872, and the Visitors always considered him a most valuable officer. Faithful and zealous in the performance of his duties, he managed the asylum admirably. He died beloved by all who were associated with him.

Dr. Rambaut, in adverting to the high mortality rate (17·91 *per cent.* on average population), attributes it to influenza, which has been endemic in the asylum for years. It and its complications claimed no less than 44 out of the 144 deaths.

We should have been glad to note more liberality on the part of the Committee than is evinced by the grant of £20 per annum to a male attendant who was incapacitated by bodily illness at the age of 57, after 17½ years' service.

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