

which they had been unable to obtain places in the Lancashire asylums, these institutions being reported full. They might get them into Leicestershire asylums on paying £1 a week, as compared with their local rate of 8s. 11d. He supposed the only course would be to pay the higher charge and make a claim upon the Lancashire Council for the difference, seeing that that authority had neglected to provide adequate accommodation."

While the Stockport Guardians have thus been pressing for increased accommodation, it would appear that difficulties have been placed in the way by certain members of the Chorlton Board. After Dr. Rhodes' able advocacy of a scheme to provide separate accommodation for imbeciles and epileptics, and thus relieve the existing establishments, the Chorlton Guardians instructed their clerk to take measures to carry out the proposal by a majority of ten to seven. Yet the *Manchester City News* supports the minority in throwing cold water on these efforts made to relieve the pressure on the asylums, and to adequately care for the cases so imperfectly dealt with in crowded workhouse wards.

*Cardiff Borough Asylum.*—The *British Architect* of 29th March contains elaborate plans, prepared for the new asylum for Cardiff, by Messrs. Wills and Anderson, who received a honorarium of £100, the premium of £500 having been awarded to Messrs. Oatley and Skinner. The editorial comment is that Messrs. Wills and Anderson's design constitutes almost the last word on asylum planning. These plans will be shown at the General Meeting in November.

*Downpatrick Asylum.*—At a meeting of the County Council held at Downpatrick, on 13th July, a report was submitted as to the accommodation of insane patients. The result was that it has been decided to erect a suitable building in proximity to the existing asylum. The *Down Recorder* expresses its opinion as follows:

"On grounds of expediency and economy alike, the plan of appropriating for the purposes of an auxiliary asylum one of the workhouses of Down, by union amalgamation, has been abandoned by the County Council, the alternative that has found favour being the erection of a new department at the existing asylum. This is in consonance with a resolution passed at the Annual Meeting in Cork of the Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain and Ireland, which views with apprehension any scheme permitting or favouring the aggregation of insane patients requiring institutional treatment except under skilled resident medical supervision. It now remains to be seen whether any obstacle will be raised to the application of the full capitation grant in the case of the chronic lunatics to be transferred from the workhouses. Presently, with that afflicted class off their hands, we shall have the Poor Law Guardians inquiring if the increase in their nursing staffs is to proceed on the current ratio."

In the same newspaper we observe that the attendant of the idiot ward in the Downpatrick Workhouse, a man of the age of 65, who some time before had entered that institution, made a suicidal attempt upon his life. We should be loath to circumscribe the usefulness of a man of that age, but the circumstances give indication of the real condition of Irish workhouses, which met with such unsparring condemnation in the *British Medical Journal* a few years ago.

#### AN EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT AT CLAYBURY.

The *British Medical Journal* of May 18th says: "We learn with pleasure that a department of experimental psychology has been established in connection with the Pathological Laboratory of the London County Council Asylums at Claybury. Dr. W. G. Smith, M.A. Edin., Ph.D., Leipzig, who has worked for upwards of two years in Germany in the Psychological Laboratories of Professor Flechsig, has been placed in charge of the new department. We understand that the problems which he proposes to study in the laboratory are—(1) the pathological changes in mental states, such as memory and association of ideas, particularly in individuals suffering from alcoholic dementia; (2) the phenomenon of reaction time in normal and abnormal individuals, as studied both by the measurement of the duration of mental processes and by analysis of the motor phenomena by the

graphic method. It is hoped that in time a series of systematic and accurate scientific records of the mental state of a number of individuals at successive periods of time will be collected, and valuable scientific results may also be hoped for by the association of these records with the morbid changes found in the brain of such cases as subsequently prove fatal. Some apparatus to equip this department was purchased when the laboratory was founded, and, out of a grant of £50 made by the Committee, further purchases have been made."

#### THE PATHOLOGY OF GENIUS.

In the July number of the *Popular Science Monthly* Mr. Havelock Ellis has an article upon the pathology of genius. Out of 322 cases where he has been able to ascertain accurately, or nearly accurately, the cause of death, lesions of the brain occurred thirty-five times, pulmonary tuberculosis thirty times, and asthma nine times. Gout is mentioned thirty-eight times, and the gouty geniuses were very remarkable, including Milton, Harvey, Sydenham, Newton, Johnson, Savage Landor, W. R. Hamilton, and Darwin. Mr. Havelock Ellis suggests that the gouty man views the world with, as it were, two different brains. When uric acid is circulating in his blood he is gloomy and introspective. When the acid is deposited in his joints his brain becomes abnormally clear. He thus exhibits well-marked mental periodicity. Gout, however, must not be considered the cause of genius, but given a highly endowed organism the gouty poison acts as a stimulus. As for insanity, of 902 eminent persons some 5 per cent. were insane. Epilepsy is mentioned as having occurred in only two cases—Lord Herbert of Chisbury and Sir W. R. Hamilton. Other nervous or neurotic conditions are, however, fairly common. Many men of genius stuttered, many were singularly awkward in performing actions requiring muscular co-ordination, and many were "neurasthenic." In fact, Mr. Havelock Ellis's researches go to show that genius exists in persons highly charged with nervous energy, but that the energy is ill-balanced and not equably distributed throughout the organism.

#### THE CERTIFYING OF THE INSANE.

Consequent upon recent scandals the following circular has been issued from the Home Office to clerks to county and borough justices, stipendiary magistrates, and the metropolitan police magistrates, under date May 31st, 1901:

"I am directed by the Secretary of State to acquaint you that he has had before him cases which have occurred in certain Poor Law unions in which the relieving officers have received payments from the district medical officers and proprietors of licensed houses in connection with the certifying of lunatics and their admission into these houses. Mr. Ritchie feels sure that he may count upon your active assistance to discover and put an end to these reprehensible practices, and with a view to preventing their repetition in the future he thinks it desirable to call the attention of magistrates to several points connected with the certifying of lunatics.

"(1) Section 16 of the Lunacy Act, 1890, which prescribes the steps to be taken when a pauper alleged to be a lunatic, or an alleged lunatic wandering at large, is brought before a justice, directs, amongst other things, that the justice shall call in a medical practitioner, and it is only when this practitioner has signed a medical certificate with regard to the lunatic that an order for his removal to an institution for lunatics can be made. In some cases the relieving officer has, it is found, often selected or influenced the selection of the medical practitioner who should examine the alleged lunatic; but it appears to the Secretary of State that the section requires that on each occasion the justice should himself call in such medical practitioner as he may think fit, and that the relieving officer should in no way be concerned in the selection.

"(2) A justice should not sign the reception order until the medical practitioner has signed the medical certificate. It appears that justices sometimes do not wait until the certificate has been signed by the medical practitioner and the statement of particulars filled in and signed by the relieving officer.