

single dose of 5 gr. was sufficient in this case to produce these symptoms to a marked degree.

Occasional Notes.

The Lunacy Bill.

THE Lunacy Bill of 1900 has passed through the House of Lords, and it may be that it will become law in the course of this session. The Bill has been so fully discussed in previous numbers of this JOURNAL that we need not revert to provisions which now reappear unchanged, or to points of comparatively little importance.

There are, however, certain clauses which cannot meet with our approval, and certain notable omissions which we must deeply regret.

First, with regard to the reduction of the valid duration of urgency orders from seven to four days. Experience has shown that this will be attended by difficulties and dangers which will not fail to leave their mark, unless there is a concomitant alteration in the powers of the Justices. Of course it is well known that the emergency certificate in Scotland is limited in operation to three days, but the circumstances are altogether different from those which have to be considered in England. The sheriff of a county or his substitutes are always accessible through the sheriff clerk's office, which is open for the transaction of business every lawful day. Dr. Percy Smith and others have graphically described the difficulties of finding a qualified Justice, when circumstances of urgency required orders for the detention of insane persons within the narrow limits of time available. No one has been found to say a word in vindication of a system which imposes such delays and distractions in view of dangers to insane persons and to the lieges. The experience of those placed in responsible positions should be considered, and their condemnation of this hazardous proposal should have due weight in the House of Commons. It should be plainly stated that the present duration of the urgency order

sometimes barely suffices to obtain the permanent order, and the failure to obtain that order means the release of the patient however dangerous he may be—unless it be made an affair of police, which cannot be too strongly deprecated. Ireland has suffered in this way, and has made its well-grounded complaint times without number. This is, indeed, a proposal which may in any case be a source of possible pain and needless worry to the relatives of insane persons. The curious point is, that after all the talk of illegal detention to which we have been treated, it is almost impossible to get the friends of patients to understand that the law must be observed in detail; and it is only when the rigors of legal procedure are brought home to individuals that they begin to realise what has been imposed upon them.

This further restriction on the medical treatment of the insane, it has been said, has been found necessary because the present law has been abused. But no details have reached the public ear. Surely the difference between seven days and four days can have no effect in the prevention of possible wrongdoing. Why four days? Why not one day? For by thus minimising the duration of villainy, the girl's excuse for the production of her illegitimate infant would be proportionally lessened—it would be such a very small one! If the procedure is right in principle, then it should be of sufficient duration to be effective. In reducing the time the principle remains, whether right or wrong, but the procedure is rendered ineffective. We trust that our Parliamentary Committee will not fail to make adequate representations to the medical members of the House of Commons in regard to this important alteration in the law. Either the present procedure should remain unaltered, or the permanent order should be obtainable without delay and inconvenience.

For the first time in its history the Bill has been introduced without clauses ensuring the granting of pensions to officials in pauper asylums. This omission has been very fully considered by the Parliamentary Committee of the Association, and we may safely leave it to them to press for a substantial measure of justice. We are all aware of the vast amount of work which has been done by Dr. Hayes Newington as chairman of that Committee, and it is now late in the day to press upon our colleagues the importance of fully informing their representatives

in the House of Commons in regard to the actual state of matters, and the urgent need for a compulsory system of assured pensions. The literature of the subject is now so voluminous that every conceivable argument has been brought into play. On the one hand, we have heard how the West Riding asylums have been deprived of pensions in consideration of an increase in pay—an increase totally inadequate to make provision for old age. On the other hand we have heard how other similar services have been dealt with, and equal claims on consideration made for asylum officials. We cannot but feel, let the result be what it may, that the Parliamentary Committee has done its best throughout this protracted struggle.

Turning to more satisfactory phases, we are glad to observe that the clauses relating to the private care of cases of incipient insanity have been retained, and that a new clause for the establishment of pathological laboratories has been inserted. This last alteration will give an impetus to the plans formulated by certain medical superintendents in the Midlands, and will, we trust, remove the last obstacle to the fruition of their hopes.

A clause, which is more important from a political than from a scientific point of view, has been added to give power to a local authority to appoint not more than one third of the visiting committee of its asylums from persons not members of the local authority. It is by no means clear how such a provision was thought to be necessary, and it is unlikely that the House of Commons will pass a clause so directly antagonistic to the system of local government built up of late years.

It may be, indeed, that the introduction of such contentious matter will affect the fortunes of the Bill, and that we shall yet see it re-introduced in coming years. At any rate, the discussion sure to be awakened by this clause may incite to a fuller consideration of the whole measure than it might otherwise have had.

Laboratory of the Scottish Asylums.

The third annual report of the Pathologist has been published. It relates to the year 1899, and gives evidence of a success which has been well deserved by the indefatigable