

capable of doing. He had obtained satisfactory evidence that the granular corpuscles that were to be observed in the neighbourhood of areas of softening in the central nervous system were derived from these mesoglia cells.

Dr. CLOUSTON said that he was sure they agreed with him in congratulating Dr. Ford Robertson on this brilliant discovery, and that he would trace out the pathology of those cells as he had shown them their histology.

Dr. EASTERBROOK read a paper on "An Attack of Epilepsy (*Status Epilepticus*) followed within six weeks by an Attack of Chorea, occurring in a patient suffering from Acute Puerperal Insanity" (see page 114).

Dr. URQUHART showed, and made observations upon, a number of forms for case-taking, etc., which had been prepared by Dr. Toulouse for use in the Villejuif Asylum.

Dr. YELLOWLEES moved a vote of thanks to Dr. Spence for his conduct in the chair, and conveyed to him the great gratification and honour which the Division felt in having the President with them on that occasion.

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#### PARLIAMENTARY NEWS.

##### STATE INEBRIATE REFORMATORIES.—October 23rd, 1899.

Mr. PICKERSGILL asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his attention had been called to the observations of the learned Chairman of the County of London Sessions on the 18th inst., in passing sentence on Joanna Driscoll, that there was no State inebriate reformatory in existence to which he could order her to be sent, as contemplated by the Inebriates Act; whether, seeing that a man who had previously been convicted seven times in twelve months was sentenced at the recent Lancaster Quarter Sessions to three years' detention in an inebriates' reformatory, but the Home Office had informed the Governor of Lancaster Castle that there was no reformatory for such inebriates, he would state what course did he propose to take with regard to this prisoner, and whether temporary arrangements had been made for the use of a portion of one of Her Majesty's prisons for a State inebriate reformatory as stated in the report of the Departmental Committee, dated 12th December last, and if not, would he be good enough to state what steps he had taken to give effect to the intention of Parliament?

Sir M. WHITE RIDLEY.—I have seen a newspaper report of the case at the London Quarter Sessions, and I am making inquiry as to the circumstances. I may say that *prima facie* the accused seems to be as well qualified for committal to a certified reformatory—of which there are now several in existence—as to a State reformatory. As regards the case at the Lancaster Quarter Sessions, I am also making inquiry, as the circumstances of the committal are not clear. I may add that there will be at least one certified reformatory ready for the reception of male inebriates in a very short time. I have abandoned the project of adapting a portion of one of Her Majesty's prisons for use as a temporary State reformatory. My reasons for so doing, as well as for hesitating to establish a permanent State reformatory, are given fully in a circular which I issued last January to Her Majesty's judges, and of which I have directed a copy to be sent to the hon. member. I will say here that subsequent experience has justified and confirmed that hesitation.

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#### RECENT MEDICO-LEGAL CASES.

REPORTED BY DR. MERCIER.

[The editors request that members will oblige by sending full newspaper reports of all cases of interest as published by the local press at the time of the assizes.]

##### *Reg. v. White.*

Frederick White, police constable, was indicted for shop-breaking. He was seen on more than one occasion to ransack shops at night, and when his house was

searched a number of purses, bags, and all sorts of things containing money were found. He admitted that a certain number of these were the products of robberies. For the defence it was urged that the prisoner was suffering from kleptomania, and Dr. Mould gave evidence that in his opinion the condition of the prisoner's mind was such as to lead him to commit offences of this kind without being responsible for his actions. The Court accepted this view, and the prisoner was bound over to be of good behaviour for six months.—*Manchester Guardian*, October 24th.

It is very unusual for a plea of kleptomania to be sustained in the case of a person not of good social position, and we must suppose that the evidence in this case was very strong; but unfortunately the meagre report on which we have to depend leaves us very much in the dark as to its character, all that is mentioned as pointing to mental disorder being the fact that the prisoner had not disposed of any of the stolen property, but had hoarded it up in his home.

*Reg. v. Harmer.*

Philip Henry Harmer was summoned before the Mark Cross Petty Sessions for receiving a lunatic and receiving payment for the maintenance of a lunatic in an unlicensed house. It was proved that the defendant did receive the patient, and that while in the defendant's house the patient manifested various signs of insanity. For the defence it was urged that when the patient was first received he was not insane; that from time to time the defendant questioned the medical attendant of the patient as to whether the patient ought not to be certified, and that the medical attendant was of opinion that he ought not; that as soon as the patient became certifiable he was certified and removed. The case was dismissed.—Mark Cross Petty Sessions, November 14th.—*Sussex Daily News*, November 15th.

The following case is kindly communicated by Dr. Savage:

*Reg. v. L. H.—*

*Menière's disease and crime.*—L. H.—, builder, was brought before the Sessions October, 1899, at Newington, on appeal against sentence for three months' hard labour for indecent exposure of his person on July 30th, 1899.

The man, aged 38, married, a builder, of good character, against whom no accusation had ever been made. He consulted a local doctor a few days before the charge for headache, giddiness, sickness. He was found to be very deaf, with history of old middle ear disease, and the diagnosis of Menière's disease was made. His memory was noticed to be very defective, and he seemed easily to become confused, almost incoherent, in his talk. He was accused of being found on a spare piece of land with his trousers undone, and his penis exposed and in his left hand, he is said to have soon been surrounded by children whom he incited to sexual offences. A woman coming, he asked *her* to come; then she threw something at him, he took no notice, she went and fetched a policeman, and then the prisoner asked the policeman if he would come. He did not seem in the least ashamed or affected by the presence of the policeman, and the latter had really to help him to dress and put his penis away. His manner was odd, he was rather like a man under the influence of alcohol, and it may be here said that evidence was forthcoming that he had had only two-pennyworth of whisky during the day, and this was afternoon. He staggered and was dazed. He was seen by Dr. Savage a few days after, who found him with great defect of recent memory, with great deafness, and with some changes in optic discs with marked defect of vision. He was seen by Dr. Savage some weeks later, and was then in the same state with further evidence of loss of memory and temporary loss of power, if not consciousness. He did not in any way endeavour to excuse himself, he only said he had no recollection of the time, and that from time to time he found there were gaps in his recollection. The general history of the man was that his deafness had slowly increased, his headaches and his defect of vision likewise had got worse; he had not been able to follow his occupation as a builder and decorator, but having some small property of his own to look after, this employed his time. The general plea was that the case was one in which with disease of the middle ear some extension of disease of the membrane affecting the cortical surface is going on, that a form of minor epilepsy has been established, and that during a period of automatism he had performed the indecent acts. I think the case worth recording from its relationship both to Menière's disease and epilepsy; and, though unable to give any

explanation, I am able to state that I have seen at least four instances in which men with disease allied to Menière's disease, if not complete examples of the disease affecting the middle ear, have been guilty of sexual faults. The Court decided to remand the prisoner for three months, during which time provision for his safety in the way of a nurse or attendant was to be provided. This being done the conviction to be quashed.

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#### ASYLUM NEWS.

*Killarney District Asylum.—Poisoning by Water-parsnip (Cenanthe crocata).—*Dr. Griffin reports that a male patient was seized by what appeared to have been an epileptic fit on 13th October. Another seizure was followed by vomiting, insensibility, and great prostration. Clonic fits supervened to the number of six, attaining their greatest intensity in the lower limbs, the upper limbs, and the face successively. He died before apomorphia had time to act, and the stomach-tube could not be used owing to the convulsions. Death was due to asphyxia, the heart having continued to beat for a few seconds after respiration ceased. Another patient was similarly affected, but an emetic relieved his stomach, and he was not insensible, although delirious. He had got a root from the patient who died, while working in a garden, and ate a little of it. The plant grows in great abundance in the south of Ireland, and is used as a poultice for boils, etc.

*Adelaide Asylums.—*We rejoice to learn that Dr. Clelland has been empowered by the Government to appoint a resident medical assistant at the Parkside Asylum. With Dr. Napier in residence at the Adelaide Asylum, the staff will now be stronger than it has been before. Our former reference to this matter will be found in the last number of the JOURNAL.

*Aberdeen New District Asylum.—*Aberdeen Parish Council, as the New District Lunacy Board, has agreed to purchase the properties of Rainniesshill and Kingseat, in the parish of Newmachar, as a site for the proposed new asylum—the former at a price somewhat under £30,000, the other about £7000.

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#### RETREATS UNDER THE INEBRIATES ACTS.

The nineteenth report of the Inspector of Retreats under the Inebriates Acts of 1879 and 1888 has been issued as a Parliamentary paper. It states that the satisfactory sanitary condition of all the fourteen establishments had been maintained, and the health of the inmates had been very good on the whole. Only one death had occurred. The licences of all the retreats existing in 1897 were renewed by the justices, and two new establishments were opened at Wandsworth and Stretford for the reception of female patients. Compared with the year 1897, the number of admissions has slightly decreased. The Acts of 1879 and 1888, although defective on some points, had worked smoothly on the whole during the year. Sections 13 to 20 of the Inebriates Act of 1898, which amend the previous Acts in relation to retreats in several important particulars, had given universal satisfaction to the licensees of the existing retreats.

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#### DIFFICULTIES UNDER THE INEBRIATES ACTS.

At Lancaster, the Chairman of Quarter Sessions, in speaking of a case of habitual drunkenness, said that, while the man should be sent to a retreat, he would have to be detained in gaol pending the instructions of the Secretary of State.

The Joint-Committee of the County and Non-county Boroughs have, however, prepared a report suggesting a Board to be formed, like the Asylums Board, under Act of Parliament. Pending this Act, the Committee suggest that the County