

Dendy intimated contributions to the sum of £1750, with further conditional promises. It was further stated, at the meeting of the Homes of Industry for Feeble-minded Girls, that the earnings of the inmates of the two homes already in operation, amounted to £312 out of an aggregate income of £994.

The Annual Meeting of the National Association for Promoting the Welfare of the Feeble-minded was held on July 8th. An address on the state of matters in Italy from this point of view concluded with an appeal for alliance between the two countries in prosecuting this new crusade. After the meeting the cottage homes were inspected, and the methods of training and teaching were shown. This association is rapidly extending its operations, and proportionately requiring financial support.

The Bill to be introduced into Parliament will probably be drafted on the lines recommended by the Departmental Committee of last year.

That committee recommended that legislation in the case of these children should very much follow the precedent set in 1893, when an Act of Parliament was passed for the education of blind and deaf children, the duty being cast upon school boards or other school authorities "to make such arrangements as the Education Department may approve for deciding (*a*) what children resident in their district, not being imbecile, are, by reason of mental or physical defect, incapable of receiving proper benefit from instruction in ordinary schools; (*b*) what children are unfit, by reason of severe epilepsy, to attend the ordinary schools." Such provision to be made in the case of defective children—"(*a*) by means of day classes certified for the time being by the Education Department as special classes; or (*b*) by boarding out, subject to the regulations of the Education Department, in a home conveniently near to a special class; or (*c*) by a home for defective children certified by the Education Department; and (in the case of epileptic children) (*d*) by a home for epileptic children certified by the Education Department." The school authorities are to have full powers to provide for the maintenance of such classes and homes; the children to be dealt with shall be over seven years of age, and the compulsory education will extend to the age of sixteen. Several school boards have already special centres for the instruction of feeble-minded children of an entirely voluntary character. The proposed legislation will make the provision incumbent on the Boards wherever required. The Government will no doubt give special assistance by grants of money towards the cost of the education, as recommended by the London School Board in a recent memorial. It is calculated by the Departmental Committee that about 1 per cent. of the children of the elementary school class appear to be feeble-minded. The special legislation in the case of blind and deaf children has been thoroughly carried into effect throughout the country; and, with the powers now sought to be conferred on the school boards and other authorities, there is every reason to believe that a like happy result will quickly ensue in the case of children who are mentally deficient or who suffer from epilepsy.

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#### THE INEBRIATES ACT, 1898.

The Inebriates Act of 1898 has been placed on the Statute Book, but the results are as yet disappointing. The fact is that the machinery is still incomplete; and, as drunkenness continues rampant, obvious failures must occur in administration. It has been enacted that drunkards, convicted four times within one year of certain specified offences, may be sent to an inebriate reformatory and detained there for three years. The Home Secretary has explained that it is not intended that these institutions should be erected by the Government, at any rate in the first instance; although contributions in aid of maintenance will be granted. Rules have been made for these reformatory institutions, and have come into effect in the United Kingdom and Ireland; but we are not aware that any such certified reformatory exists in Scotland or in Ireland, while those which have been certified in England are manifestly insufficient to meet the immediate demands on their accommodation. We note that the Royal Victoria Homes at Bristol have been certified for 60 women; Lady Henry Somerset's Homes at Duxhurst for 12 women; at St. Joseph's Homes at Ashford for 56 female Roman Catholics. There is immediate need of a

reformatory for men, and the Inebriate Reformatory Committee (32, Charing Cross, S.W.) appeal for funds, not to relieve the counties of their obligations, but to meet the pressing wants of the day.

Many cases have been reported showing that the law is being brought into disrepute by the inability of existing homes to receive the persons sentenced. For instance, on the 14th July, the *Times* reports that Annie Bennett was ordered to be detained at Duxhurst for twelve months, and it was found later in the day that there was no room for her. The Chairman of the County of London Sessions said that the Act was practically a dead letter.

In February last the London County Council appointed a committee to submit a scheme whereby the powers conferred by the Act might be exercised. The committee was to consider whether it would be better for the Council to erect a new building or to acquire one already erected. A provisional estimate was given that a reformatory for 100 inmates would cost from £14,000 to £22,000, according to the character of the building. From inquiries previously made it appears that it is not improbable that during the first year about 100 males and 200 females will be dealt with under the Act. They were also to consider whether the Council should contribute towards the establishment or maintenance of a retreat for the reception of persons who, being habitual drunkards but not convicted, are willing to place themselves under care for a period. As the Council under the new Bill has become the licensing authority for retreats in London under the Act, it is directed to report also as to what committee should be referred the duty of considering and reporting on applications for licensing for retreats.

In June, Dr. Collins, the Chairman, presented a report setting forth the state of matters, and stating that they recommended that the Council should establish their own reformatory, although temporary arrangements might be made with existing reformatories. This course has been adopted with the Duxhurst and St. Joseph's Homes for a year.

A conference of the Lancashire County and Borough Councils was held in June, when the chairman, Sir John Hibbert, moved that it was desirable that one inebriates' home for men and two for women should be established for Lancashire. The motion was carried unanimously.

The National United Temperance Council met in July, and it was reported that £2000 had been offered to build an inebriate reformatory, so that the matter would receive immediate consideration.

The counties contributing to the Bristol Homes are Gloucester, Warwick, and Worcester. Dr. Cotton, a member of the Medico-Psychological Association, was appointed medical officer and has given careful attention to his duties. The rules of the Secretary of State prescribed that he should live within two miles of the institution; but considering the chaotic condition of affairs this has been wisely relaxed until the numbers reach 100.

Notwithstanding the activity manifested in these various quarters it is to be hoped that the Government will lose no time in assisting to remedy the present unsatisfactory state of matters by the erection of a model State institution in each of the three divisions of the kingdom. Such an institution should be largely self-supporting when the initial cost is met, and the money could not be more wisely spent. The Government is assuredly, without loss of time, bound to relieve the law courts from the stigma of unfulfilled sentences.

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#### OBITUARY.

##### SERAFINO BIFFI.

The death has lately been announced of Dr. Biffi, who, next to Verga, with whom he was closely associated, may be regarded as one of the founders of modern Italian psychiatry.

Serafino Biffi was born at Milan in 1822 and studied medicine at Pavia. As a student he took special interest in experimental work, which was then an entirely new method, and was still a student when, with Morganti, he published his researches demonstrating the function of the lingual nerve and his experiments on the innervation of the iris. After graduating with honours he turned from experi