9. Asylum Reports.

Some English County Asylums.

Devon.—The Committee report four times in each year to the County Council, which we believe to be an uncommon practice. Yet in addition to this they desire to be brought into still closer relation to the parent body.

> The Committee are of opinion that they should be more closely associated with the office of the Clerk of the Council, and have, as all the other committees, the advantage of the clerk at their meetings. Such an arrangement would tend to facilitate the business and render unnecessary the constant reference of one office to the other, and they hope the County Council will sanction such an alteration.

They also

> recommend the Council to approve of the third proposal of the Select Committee, "that county councils should have power conferred upon them to provide separate accommodation for imbeciles and epileptics."

We see no reason against committees and county councils taking such powers, but as we have said before, though in individual instances some good may arise, it is not probable that any such benefit will be found by its general application as some authorities seem to think.

A proportion of 26 general paralytics in 111 male admissions is enormous, especially when it is remembered that the chief seaport in the county has its own asylum.

Gloucestershire.—This county is one that shows no increase in occurring insanity.

The subjoined is from the Commissioners' report and is noteworthy:

> We may say that a general air of contentment reigned. No one was turbulent, very few noisy, and we attribute much of the quietude to be due to the fact that the Committee regularly visit the wards and listen to the patients' complaints.

Dr. Cradock makes a close study of American legislation for the limitation of insanity. He reproduces the following from a Minnesota project of law:

> The Bill provides that no man or woman who is epileptic, imbecile, feeble-minded, or afflicted with chronic insanity shall intermarry within the State when the woman is under the age of forty-five years. Any person who, not being an epileptic, marries an imbecile or one afflicted with chronic insanity, or who knowingly violates this provision, shall, upon conviction, be punished by a fine of not more than $1000 (£200), or by imprisonment in the State prison for not more than five years, or by both such fine and imprisonment.

It would be interesting to know on what grounds an epileptic is thus favoured.

We are getting on. It is stated that at a Colorado medical meeting a doctor proposed that parents should be allowed to arrange the painless destruction of their imbecile children. Commenting on this the *Medical Journal* (of that ilk?) appears to have said (possibly in sarcasm):

> The proposed law is too wishy-washy: the children should be killed whether

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their parents consent or not, and the latter also had better be put out of the way lest they procreate other children of feeble intellect!

It is well that full development of the idea should be put before those who hope to limit insanity by Act of Parliament.

Hereford.—The old, old story from the Commissioners' report!

The staff of attendants gives for day duty one for every eight and a half male and one for every eight female patients.

Numerically this is a sufficient staff, but we regret to say that the duration of the service is most unsatisfactory, no less than 58 per cent. of the men, for instance, having been less than one year in the asylum service.

This, coupled with the fact that there have been since our colleagues' visit, several instances of roughness towards and neglect of patients, points to the necessity of measures being taken to secure and retain the services of competent and suitable attendants.

The scale of wages for the attendants of the first class on both sides is too low, especially having regard to the fact (which we mention with regret) that no prospect of a pension is held out on retirement.

Another cause that militates against the duration of the service of the staff is the lack of cottage accommodation for married attendants.

And from Dr. Morrison's report:

But the duration of service among the male attendants is highly unsatisfactory. The majority of the class of men we have had in recent years to select for appointments have left much to be desired for their fitness, while many who have shown aptitude for the work have left either to revert to their previous trades, enter the Poor Law service with its prospect of pension, or to take up private nursing, all of which appear to offer a better remunerative opening to steady well-trained men than service in the asylum. Your Committee will need to provide means and ways to retain the services of this class of men, which at present we seem unable to do.

Northumberland.—It is odd reading that a coroner should stir the Committee up to provide an Isolation Hospital. But the occurrence of a second case of erysipelas in one ward prompted a jury to express a not unnatural surprise that there is no means of isolating infectious disease in this asylum. The procedure bore immediate fruit.

Dr. McDowall states that while free expert advice in mental trouble, though offered, was not accepted when given at the asylum, the institution of an out-patient department for such cases at the Royal Infirmary, Newcastle, has been accompanied by marked success. He attends once a week.

Somerset and Bath (Wells).—We deeply regret to have to mention the sad death of Dr. Law Wade. The facts of his death and his claims to a feeling remembrance of his services and life on the part of the Association have been appropriately dealt with elsewhere. It is noteworthy that this his last report shows for the year such satisfactory ratios as 51·4 of recoveries and 8·9 of deaths. In relation to the latter it may be pointed out that while influenza and its complications carried off none of the 32 males who died, no less than 18 out of the 42 female deaths were attributed to this fell disease.

That Dr. Wade possessed one essential element of success in managing an asylum—the securing the esteem of the subordinate staff—

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is made evident by the subjoined extract from the Commissioners' report:

The staff of attendants is sufficiently strong, and they seem of a respectable class. No fewer than 60 per cent. of the men and 30 per cent. of the women have lived for many years in the asylum service, whilst the number of men under one year's service would be reduced by one half had it not been for the calling out of the Reserves.

Suffolk.—We commend to notice Dr. Whitwell's method of showing statistical facts by chromatic plans. On one sheet the additions, subtractions, and remainders of patients at the end of each year are thus contrasted. A second sheet brings before the eye in a forcible manner a division of patients, union by union, into five classes—acute recoverable cases, those who are chronic but must be detained, those who are chronic but might be treated elsewhere, those who are chronic but whose removal would mean expensive increase in staff, imbeciles and idiots. As Dr. Whitwell remarks, the table shows the population of the asylum in terms of the money value of its elements to the community.

The following pregnant table shows from this year's admissions the tendency of cases to recover or otherwise in relation to the period at which they come under treatment:

Patients who came under treatment before termination of the	Percentage of recoveries.
1st month after inception	90 *per cent.*
2nd " "	73 "
6th " "	20 "
12th " "	—

The admission of a child of 5 years old suffering from mild imbecility suggests that the ordinary Poor Law arrangements in Suffolk have not attained a very high level of efficiency.

West Riding.—The wages and hours of service are under the consideration of the committees on the representation of the staff.

At *Menston* a new Homestead has been built and taken into use. It accommodates 40 farm patients, with 4 attendants. It is found to be very useful.

At *Wakefield* the Acute Hospital has been opened, and so far has been found to answer its purpose admirably. Stanley Hall has been purchased and adapted for the reception of imbecile and idiot lads suitable for the treatment to be provided there. A specially trained attendant and his wife from the Royal Albert Asylum have been engaged as chief attendant and schoolmistress. Further development of the principle of segregation in this asylum consists of new epileptic blocks and two cottage homes.

Some Scottish District Asylums.

Glasgow, Gartloch.—This report is the last which Dr. Oswald will issue. His translation to Gartnavel, on which we congratulate him, will be dealt with in another part of the JOURNAL. Though it is only the fourth report of the asylum, it tells of a proposed increase of 240 beds

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