GRANT FOR IRISH ASYLUM.

The Chief Secretary, in a long letter to Mr. Redmond, M.P., under date 10th May last, explained that the changes involved by the Local Government Act have not injuriously affected the finances of the Irish asylums. He pointed out that the 4*s*. grant is an aid to the expenses of the year in which it is paid, and not a repayment of the expenditure of the previous year; and that the alteration implied by the closing of accounts on the 31st March, instead of the 31st December, has really resulted in a slight benefit to the institutions.

ASYLUM NEWS.

Claybury Asylum.—It is reported that the Committee of the Claybury Asylum have decided to discontinue the employment of women as Assistant Medical Officers in that institution, on the ground that they are unequal to the heavy duties demanded of them; but they recommend to the County Council that Dr. Emily Dove should be paid £270 as compensation for the abolition of her office.

Mullingar Asylum.—An epileptic patient died recently in Mullingar Asylum after eating a small quantity of yew leaves, which he had plucked in the grounds of the institution. The evidence at the inquest showed that death had resulted from failure of the heart's action after an epileptic seizure, death having been accelerated by eating the yew leaves. The jury recommended that all poisonous trees in the grounds of the Mullingar Asylum should be fenced. A circular of the Scottish Board of Lunacy issued in 1871 contained a similar warning. It is doubtful, however, if the gardens and grounds of asylums are generally secure against all poisonous trees, plants, and fungi.

Exeter Workhouse.—Dr. Woodman reports, in the *British Medical Journal* of 29th June, a case of attempted suicide by drinking Jeyes' fluid. A man, aged 31, drank a pint and a quarter of the undiluted fluid, and was shortly found unconscious, collapsed, and almost pulseless. The breathing was stertorous and the pupils contracted. After a hypodermic injection of brandy, the stomach-tube was passed and the stomach washed out. Two days afterwards he had slight pain in the throat and stomach, and he entirely recovered within a week. Dr. Woodman remarks on the slight effects upon the œsophagus and stomach, and it is of importance to asylum physicians to know that the comparative safety of this powerful disinfectant, claimed by the proprietors of Jeyes' fluid, has been proved in this experimental manner. A similar amount of crude carbolic acid must have been necessarily fatal. In 1891 in England and Wales ninety-five persons died from the latter poison.

Lancashire Asylums.—The *Manchester Guardian* of 18th March referred to the deficient asylum accommodation in the Lancashire asylums. At Preston a man had been charged with wandering at large when in an unsound state of mind, and the Magistrates' Clerk said that was the third case within a month. Mr. Blackhurst, who appeared for the police, said the workhouse authorities refused to take him, alleging lack of accommodation and attendants. Replies that there were no vacancies had been received from Whittingham, Prestwich, and Lancaster Asylums. The magistrates' clerk had written to the Home Secretary, who had replied "that in such a case he thought that rather than allow him to go at large it was not only justifiable, but was the duty of the police to detain him till provision had been made for his proper custody. In doing so care must be taken to treat the lunatic, as far as their means allowed, in the manner proper to his condition. It was probable, however, that at the workhouse better means existed for a lunatic's detention than at a police station, and therefore if some time must elapse before he could be received in an asylum, further pressure should be brought to bear on the workhouse authorities to take charge of him."

The Bench made an order for the man to be detained as long as necessary, pending his removal to an asylum.

Again on the 13th August the same newspaper records that: "at a meeting of the Guardians of the Stockport Union the chairman stated that, while they could get places in Cheshire asylums for cases occurring in the Cheshire part of the Union, there were cases in the workhouse from the Lancashire side for

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.47.199.858-a Published online by Cambridge University Press

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 8*s.* 11*d.* 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 unsparing 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

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