Mental Hospital Reports for 1919.

Belfast District.—As compared with the previous year the numbers in residence show a decrease of 5—the actual total being 985. The admissions increased by 15, discharges and deaths diminished by 6 and 61 respectively; but the death-rate still stands at an abnormally high figure, being 14·8 *per cent.* of the daily average number resident—not of the total number resident during the year, which the wording of the report would appear to imply.

There is, however, the satisfaction of noting a handsome decrease in this respect from the experience of the preceding year, which had a percentage of over 19. General paralysis accounted for 16·7 *per cent.* of the total deaths.

One hundred and fifteen patients were discharged with a recovery rate of 30·1 *per cent.* as estimated upon the number of admissions, or of 5·9 *per cent.* if the total number resident during the year be taken as the criterion.

The Villa Colony is overcrowded to the extent of 215 patients, or 28·5 *per cent.* above its normal capacity. This fact calls for either an increase in the number of villa residences or the reoccupation of the old asylum buildings in Grosvenor Road. The latter would appear to be a retrograde step, and it is hoped that the Committee may see their way to extend the Villa system in consonance with the progressive spirit of the city they serve.

In order to meet the demands of the subordinate staff, the scheme of wages and working hours which has been drawn up by the Joint Conciliation Committee for the Asylums of England and Wales has been adopted.

Amongst occurrences of note during the year was the evacuation of the old asylum buildings in Grosvenor Road by the Army Authorities. There, under the name of the Belfast War Hospital, mentally afflicted soldiers had found sanctuary and treatment during a considerable proportion of the war. Another matter of interest was the setting up of part of Purdysburn House for the accommodation of paying patients, which apparently leaves the resident medical superintendent without a residence befitting his position. This is not as it should be. Both the senior and second assistant medical officers have come successfully through active service, adorned with the honours of war. Each has won the right to wear the M.C., and in the case of the second assistant—Lieut.-Col. Wm. Tyrell—the D.S.O. has also been conferred. The latter, however, has resigned his asylum appointment to take a permanent commission in the corps in which he has won such distinction.

Down District.—Little change has taken place in the number of patients in residence since the corresponding period of the previous year, the actual number at the end of 1919 being 712.

One hundred and eighteen patients have been admitted, in the causation of whose illness heredity was held to be responsible in 37 cases, senility in 15, mental stress in 10 and syphilis in 5.

In many respects Downpatrick is an exception to the rule obtaining

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in most Irish district asylums. These respects need not be dwelt on here except concerning the rather doubtful honour it possesses in its liability to contain more than its share of general paralytics, a fact that may be accounted for by its proximity to Belfast. Five examples of this form of disease were admitted during the year. In many another Irish asylum there would not be even one case spread over a series of years. Of the other admissions, 54 patients were classified under the various forms of melancholia, and 31 under the divisions of mania. There was only one primary dement. Sixty-three patients were discharged, of whom 50 had recovered, which gives a recovery rate of 42·4 *per cent.* as calculated upon the admissions.

Death accounted for 57, a decrease of 29 compared with the previous year. The percentage of deaths on the daily average number resident now stands at 8, which compares with 11·6 for 1918. Twenty-nine of these deaths were caused by diseases of the circulatory system, which works out at over 50 *per cent.* of the total—a somewhat remarkable result. Eighteen deaths were caused by tuberculosis and 5 by epilepsy.

The gross average cost of maintenance is at £58, showing an increase of almost £8 in the year.

Farming has produced the satisfactory total of almost £2,758, the area being 136 acres of the asylum land plus 28 additional acres rented for the purpose.

The medical superintendent lays stress upon the necessity of establishing psychopathic wards, associated with out-clinics, in the general hospitals. He also draws attention to the want of special knowledge in mental disease on the part of many young medical officers who enter the service, and he expresses the opinion that the possession of a diploma should be an essential either before or after appointment.

In this connection, however, it is well to remember that, with the exception of one university, neither post-graduate lectures nor registerable diplomata for the subject are available within the country. The excepted university's diploma is, unfortunately, confined to her own graduates.

It would be asking too much from the recently qualified were they expected to agitate for the establishment of facilities in the dilatory universities and colleges. Some impetus, however, may be needed before the deficiency will be made good and so remove a very serious handicap from the young medical graduates of the country.

Kilkenny District.—The admissions for the year were 84 in number —an increase of 21 compared with the preceding year. Heredity was considered to have been the principal causative factor in 37 *per cent.* of the admitted. This percentage is well above the average return in Irish asylums as a whole. In 32 instances—equal to 38 *per cent.* of the total—no causative factor could be ascertained owing to a defective history. Twelve of the patients had seen service in the army during the war.

Of the 27 who were discharged, 19 had recovered, which gives a rate of 22·6 *per cent.*, as calculated upon the admissions. The percentage

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of deaths on the daily average number resident was 8·2—a valuable diminution from the 14 *per cent.* of the previous year. The reduction was attributed to two circumstances—an improvement in the condition of the bread owing to the abandonment of war flour, and the absence of a serious influenzal epidemic in the period under review.

The asylum population was increased by 18 patients, the actual number of those in residence at the end of the year having been 490. The increase is accounted for by a decreased death-rate plus an increased number of admissions.

The average gross cost, without any deductions, came to £63 11*s.* 6*d.*, which figures show the enormous increase of £16 6*s.* 4*d.* over those for 1918. This increase, no doubt, was largely due to the introduction of the 56-hour working week, which entailed the appointment of 13 additional attendants, and also to the greater remunerations given in the form of wages. In this connection, however, apparently there has not been any *quid pro quo* concerning the possession of nursing qualifications, for according to the memorandum of inspection, no instruction was being given to enable the staff to qualify for the certificate of the Medico-Psychological Association.

The farm has produced a net profit of £1,355, the area under cultivation and grass having been 30 and 14 acres respectively.

Limerick District.—There were 600 patients on the register of this asylum at the end of last year, which, in comparison with the same period of the preceding one, shows a decrease of 27. The decrease, however, is not so satisfactory as it would appear to be, insomuch as it was mainly due to the removal of some patients during a strike. Thirty-two of these did not return to the institution.

One hundred and sixteen were admitted, the chief causative factors of whose illness were heredity in 34 cases, mental stress in 20, and mental instability in 9.

No factor was ascertainable as a cause, owing to defective history, in the large number of 39 patients, or 33 *per cent.* of the total admissions. In not even a single case was syphilis the cause, which is somewhat remarkable for a port with claims to being the country's fourth in importance. Alcohol accounted only for the illness of 3.

Of the total number discharged, 12 had recovered and 60 were relieved. The recovery rate stands low at 10·3 *per cent.* of the admissions. This result may have been influenced by the circumstances mentioned above—the removal of patients before recovery had been established. In the previous report the rate of recovery was 22 *per cent.*

Sixty-eight patients died, which gave a death-rate of 11·6 *per cent.* of the daily average number resident. Eight of these were accounted for by influenza, and in 20 pulmonary disease was the cause.

Seventy-two acres of land produced a profit of £1,007. Forty-eight acres had been in grass, and 24 under cultivation.

The gross average cost came to the sum of £61 4*s.* 4*d.* If the repayment of loans be deducted, the result was £58 7*s.* 11*d.*

Deducting various receipts from paying patients, farm profits, etc., the average cost is reduced to £55 15*s.* 6*d.*, which is an increase of almost six pounds over the figures for 1918–1919. The cause of this

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increase was shared between the cost of provisions, larger wages, and the necessity for employing 14 additional attendants owing to the introduction of the 56-hour week.

The auditor draws attention to the fact that the tradesmen are paid the standard rate of wages current in the district. In the case of those who draw rations, the value of these is taken at much below their real worth—with the result that these men are being paid, in reality, at a higher rate than the standard wage would entitle them. This he regards as unfair both to those of their colleagues who receive a cash allowance in lieu of rations and to the ratepayers.

As already mentioned, such a regrettable affair as a strike took place in the ranks of the nursing staff. The matters in dispute were amicably settled when the strike had been on for a week.

The exact age of an institution has a certain interest. For this reason one regrets that the actual number of the report under review has been omitted. Especially is it so in this case, concerning as it does indirectly the historic "City of the violated Treaty."

Wexford District.—The patients under treatment on the 31st December, 1919, were 477 in number—266 being women, and the remainder, 211, being men. These figures show a reduction of 6 as compared with those for the previous year.

The admissions rose by 22 in their total of 81. Discharged patients counted 43, of whom 28 had recovered, which gives a rate of 34·6 *per cent.* as calculated upon the admissions.

Forty-three died, which, on the daily average number resident, is a rate of 9 *per cent.* Of the total deaths 7, or 16 *per cent.*, were caused by pulmonary tuberculosis and 2 by accidents. One of the latter took place owing to the inhalation of vomited matter during an epileptic fit, and the other followed a fracture of the ribs. Among causative factors, 35 cases were assigned to insane heredity, which works out at a rate of 43 *per cent.*, as calculated upon the admissions. Heredity, as a whole, was responsible either directly or indirectly for the illness of 50 patients, which equals 61 *per cent.* of the admissions. The gross average cost without any deductions came to £57 6*s.* 8*d.*, and the net cost to £50 1*s.* 8*d.* These amounts are considerably more than the £48 4*s.* 2*d.* and £41 10*s.* 4*d.* of the year 1918. Farming has proved a valuable asset with its profit of £2,104, which compares most favourably with the £1,002 profit of the previous year.

The sad death of Dr. Thomas Drapes took place during the year. First as visiting physician and later as resident medical superintendent he had served the Institution for 47 years, and had only been superannuated a few months when death called him.

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