

in out-of-the-way places. A larger proportion of insane are now treated in asylums in Wilts than formerly, but at the same time, more are kept at workhouses and at home than in the more active centres. Dr. Bowes gives most careful tables analysing the causes of insanity, and he shows that in such counties as Wilts heredity plays a very marked part.

HOSPITAL PHYSICIANS AND ALCOHOLISM.

At the meeting of the Hospitals Medical Society, Paris, held last December, M. Legendre, alarmed by the ever-increasing amount of drunkenness, asked if it would not be possible to withstand this by means of meetings, insistence on the dangers of alcohol, and by what he considered an even better method, that of getting up for the instruction of patients lantern shows with exhibitions of anatomical preparations to show the dangers of alcohol. M. Legendre has had printed for the use of all his patients a little leaflet setting forth in the clearest manner the evils which follow the use of alcohol. He gives one of these to every patient of his both on admission to hospital and when he is discharged. Besides this, he has had them stuck up all over his wards and even in the lavatories as being quiet places where the patients will have leisure to read them with the object of bringing about a veritable obsession against alcohol. The text runs as follows:—"Most of the diseases treated in the hospitals arise from alcoholic drinks,—that is to say, they are either caused or aggravated by the abuse of alcohol. All alcoholic drinks are dangerous, and the most harmful are those which contain aromatics in addition to alcohol—as, for instance, *absinthe* and the so-called aperients called *ainers*. Alcoholic drinks are more dangerous when taken on an empty stomach or between meals. A man necessarily becomes an alcoholic, *i. e.* slowly poisoned by alcohol, even if he never gets drunk, when every day he drinks alcohol in the form of liqueur or too much wine, more than one litre per diem. Alcohol is a poison, the habitual use of which destroys more or less quickly, but none the less certainly, all the organs most necessary to life—the stomach, the liver, the kidneys, the blood-vessels, the heart, and the brain. Alcohol excites man, but does not strengthen him. It is no substitute for food, but takes away the taste for it. Those who often drink alcohol or too much wine (more than one litre a day) are much more liable to illness, and when ill are much worse, for the disease is often complicated with fatal delirium. Alcohol is a frequent cause of consumption by its power of weakening the lungs. Every year we see patients who attend the hospitals for alcoholism come back some months later suffering from consumption. Fathers and mothers who drink often have children who are deformed or idiots or who die from fits."

THE "ASYLUM NEWS."

The Asylum Workers' Association is rapidly increasing in members and importance. At the annual meeting of last year Sir James Crichton-Browne took the chair, and delivered an eloquent address which marked a new epoch in the practical outcome of his revered father's aims and labours so many years ago. This year also sees Sir James Crichton-Browne in the presidential chair, and we rejoice that the Association is honoured with his active co-operation. The dignity and importance of the work is gaining due recognition, and we must congratulate Dr. Shuttleworth on the results of his generous labours and assiduous attention. We cannot but quote a passage from the *Asylum News* for March 15th, which bears the impress of his hand and clear brain. Some such declaration is certainly called for while the *Hospital* persists in unfair criticism of a scheme which ought to be adopted in other departments of the nursing profession. The editor of the *Asylum News* says: "It seems to us that one uniform system of examination for nurses and attendants throughout the Kingdom is on many grounds to be preferred to individual asylums examining and certifying their own employés. We know that

good work has been done in this way at Northampton and other asylums, and possibly the Medico-Psychological Association may profit by incorporating into its own scheme some of the methods proved useful at these institutions. In order, however, to maintain an uniform and sufficiently high standard of training and acquirement, it is desirable that a central authority, such as the Medico-Psychological Association, should have the control of examinations, and we are glad to hear that in the near future 'all questions will be set by specially appointed examiners, who will also read and assess the replies from every asylum, and in this manner the risk of variation of standard at different asylums will be obviated.'

LABORATORY OF THE SCOTTISH ASYLUMS.

The report of the General Board of Management has now been issued, signed by Dr. Yellowlees, the chairman. We are glad to note that the financial condition of the institution is satisfactory, for the successful issue of this scheme will induce other parts of the country to go and do likewise. The Board rightly bestow high praise upon the services performed by Dr. Ford Robertson, whose annual report has also been circulated. He refers to his work in original research, which has been already in part placed before our readers, and acknowledges various gifts made to the Laboratory. Dr. Robertson also has a word of praise for other workers who have assisted him during the past year, and notes the appointment of Dr. David Orr as pathologist to the Prestwich Asylum. We understand that Dr. Ford Robertson has in preparation a *Text-Book on the Pathology of Mental Diseases*, and shall await its issue with keen expectation. As it will be fully illustrated with expensive plates we trust that the members of the Association will do their best to subscribe for the limited edition to which it must be restricted. The price has been fixed at fifteen shillings net, and orders may be given to Mr. Clay, Publisher, 18, Teviot Place, Edinburgh.

"LUNATICK ASYLUMS."

The *Lancet* says:—"We have received a small pamphlet bearing the above title. The sub-title is 'An Essay by a Doctor of Arts, Oxford.' The degree is one we are not familiar with, and if conferred by any university it is certainly not so by the University of Oxford as would seem to be implied. The writer's argument would seem to be shortly that (1) asylums are too palatial and luxurious; (2) that weak-minded persons should be treated in separate establishments, however small and homely; (3) that there should be no private madhouses; (4) that asylums are conducted on the lines made familiar to us by such works as 'Valentine Vox' and 'Hard Cash'; and (5) that 'into these establishments the young and unfortunate are trepanned—magisterial warrants not even solicited— That the 'over wrought' should be tended in a home something resembling the best kinds of almshouse is an idea with which we can all agree, but that the modern lunatic asylum is anything like the institution which a 'Doctor of Arts' describes or that Lunacy Commissioners neglect their duty, as he implies, is absurd."

We reproduce this to show that our critics are still on the alert, and that some of them are as unreasonable as ever. Lately, as reported by the *Hospital*, on the opening of a new building at Lewisham Infirmary for the reception of insane patients, the Chairman of the Board of Guardians "compared private asylums with those supported by the public purse to the disadvantage of the former, because it was profitable to the former to retain their patients as long as possible, &c., &c. Our readers will not be surprised to hear that Dr. Toogood followed with the opinion that incipient lunacy is better treated by general practitioners than by specialists, because "often physical causes lay at the root of mental disturbance, and with the healing of the body the mind recovered its balance," and so on. It was evidently