

during the past twenty years, and the jury returned a verdict of "Death from Misadventure."

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#### CRIMINAL ANTHROPOLOGY.

The Italian Chamber of Deputies have passed the second reading of the Government Bill relating to habitual criminals. High praise was given to the late Dr. Bruce Thomson in the course of the debate. The present penal system was unsparingly denounced, and large hopes of social improvement were held out consequent on the operation of the new law. The incidents and observations of the last three years, together with this action on the part of Italy, will afford material for discussion at the International Congress of Criminal Anthropology which is to be held at the Hague in August next.

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#### CRIMINAL LUNATICS IN ORDINARY ASYLUMS.

Lord Sandwich, at a meeting of the Huntingdonshire County Council, lately referred to the case of a man named Clifton, who had been tried for attempted murder, but was ordered to be detained during Her Majesty's pleasure. Clifton would have been sent to Broadmoor, but it was full, and the only alternative was to send him to the Three Counties Asylum. There was no reason to consider him dangerous, but only of weak intellect. Clifton managed to get amongst the stream of patients going out at one door when he should have gone out at another. He had never since been heard of. It was impossible to prevent a recurrence of this, because the whole principle of the care of lunatics was that they should be subjected to as little restraint as was possible. A caution had, however, been given to the attendants that a more careful watch should be set on those who were suspected of homicidal mania, or were dangerous to themselves or others. Beyond that it was impossible to go, except by such an increase of staff as would necessitate a total reorganisation and a reconstruction of the asylums throughout the country. If pressure was put on the Government, and they could see their way to provide more accommodation for criminal lunatics of this character, it would be the best way to prevent such escapes. Lord Sandwich moved that the attention of the Home Secretary be called to the matter, and this course was agreed to.

We trust that this case will cause some decided action on the part of the Government, for it has long been evident that such patients are unsuitable for ordinary treatment, and detrimental to the interests of their fellows in county asylums.

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#### LUNACY IN COUNTRY DISTRICTS.

Dr. Bowes has issued a most interesting report on the existing high rate of lunacy in Wiltshire.

The first question discussed is whether the apparent increase of insanity in England is real or only due to accumulation of the chronic insane and the removal of many quiet dements from their homes and asylums. Dr. Bowes agrees with the general impression that there is some increase, but not enough to create alarm. He points out that there is a much larger proportion of insane to sane among the agricultural labourers than among miners and city dwellers. He shows that for thirty years the agricultural counties have shown most pauperism and most insanity. He thinks that marrying in and the poorness of the living and generally depressing vital conditions account for this. All this is true, but we believe that it is true also that the more feeble are left in the country to breed degenerates and to live from hand to mouth. The morally weak as well as the mentally feeble tend to collect

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.

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#### 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."

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#### 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