

made to make the work of the Association more widely known, and thus secure a larger number of subscribers. During the proceedings Dr. Mocatta promised a donation of £25 if a sum of £1000 was raised by other benefactions. The Rev. H. Hawkins closed the meeting with a sketch of the origin and growth of the Association, mentioning in the course of his remarks that the French society for the same object is far ahead of ours.

INFLUENZA AND ISOLATION.

The epidemic of influenza raises a question of vital importance. Is it possible by isolation to save the risk of infection? It seems to us that the Collective Investigation Committee might obtain an authoritative answer. The recrudescence of this plague year after year has opened a wide field of experience, and still opinion seems to be contradictory and chaotic. Isolated papers and letters, records in asylum case-books, and annual reports should be analysed and brought into focus.

FATIGUE IN SCHOOLS.

Mosso has pointed out that the fatigue curve was characteristic for each person, and that the amount of work done by a muscle could be expressed in terms of work as kilogrammetres; he showed, too, that mental fatigue, in so far as it affected the general nutrition of the body, could also be estimated in kilogrammetres. Acting on this suggestion, Dr. Kemsies has lately employed the ergograph systematically for a year in two large schools in Berlin. Curves were taken before and after lessons, and the particular lesson was noted. The general result of these experiments was that the pupils showed greatest fatigue after gymnastics. With regard to mental exercises, mathematics headed the list; then came foreign languages, religion, and history; natural history showed least fatigue. A specimen of a day's experiments is as follows:—After nine hours' sleep, 5657 kilogrammetres; after one hour lecture, afternoon, 4086 kilogrammetres; after walk and bath, 5282 kilogrammetres; after evening lesson, 4094 kilogrammetres. The fatigue passes off again after two hours from its commencement if the lesson has been changed.

MESCAL.

Mr. Havelock Ellis has, in the *Contemporary Review*, lately recorded the effects of mescal (*Anhalonium Lewinii*) upon two poets, an artist and himself, as Dr. Weir Mitchell did so fully in the *British Medical Journal* of December, 1896. The colour sense in the insane is not infrequently affected painfully or agreeably. It is common to hear complaints that everything looks black or grey in melancholia, and sometimes red is predominant in the ideas and conversation. We are not aware that mescal has been given in these conditions.

WANDERING LUNATICS.

The city coroner of Liverpool, Mr. Sampson, has lately drawn attention to the fact that there is no suitable provision for dealing with persons suffering from the milder forms of mental aberration, and who, while they show no definite marks of insanity, are unable to give any satisfactory account of themselves, and are clearly in a condition in which insane impulses might at any time arise with grave danger either to themselves or to others. Such persons are frequently found by the police wandering at large, and are then conveyed to the bridewell and examined by a medical man. If they are found to be unable to take care of themselves, and yet the medical man does not feel justified in certifying then and there that they are insane, it is manifest that, in the interests both of the sufferers themselves and of the public, they should be retained in some suitable

place until the cause and nature of the mental aberration can be ascertained. Until recently no serious difficulty in dealing with such cases has arisen, since they have been received into the workhouse on a doctor's note, and there dealt with as the occasion demanded. Latterly, however, the authorities of Mill Road Infirmary have declined to receive them, owing, it is stated, to there being no accommodation in the workhouse for the alleged lunatics; and there has been no alternative but to take them back to the bridewell, where there is no proper provision for attending to them, and to bring them before the presiding magistrate the following day. As these persons are not charged with any offence for which they can be committed to goal, there is no alternative but to discharge them.

It is high time that reception houses for all cases of supposed insanity were established in the great centres of population. The Barony Parish of Glasgow has set apart observation wards in the ordinary poorhouse to meet this difficulty, and we understand that good results have been obtained there, not only for the individuals, but also for the ratepayers.

LABORATORY OF THE SCOTTISH ASYLUMS.

The first annual report deals with a period of seven weeks. Four assistant medical officers had received a course of instruction, and reports had been made on material from six cases. The superintendent has entered on his duties with great zeal and ability, and has visited four asylums for the purpose of advising, besides aiding in research. The work in hand has been very varied, and Dr. Robertson is at present engaged in the study of the changes affecting the nerve cells in insanity. He states that the premises are well suited for the purpose. No doubt his report for next year will bear evidence of much good work accomplished in the same spirit as he has begun.

THE CASE OF REV. H. J. DODSWELL.

It is reported that the Home Secretary has decided not to interfere in this case. A petition was lately presented for Mr. Dodswell's release, on the grounds that the maximum punishment for the offence of which he was convicted had long since expired, and that if he was still considered insane he should now be detained in a private, not a criminal asylum. We heartily approve of the Home Secretary's decision.

FRAGILITY OF BONES IN THE INSANE.

A patient in the Cork Asylum lately died, after it was found that several of his ribs had been fractured. Dr. Oscar Woods caused an expert examination of the bones to be made, with the result that they were proved to be excessively degenerated and fragile. It would seem that such observations should put an end to the loose statements occasionally made in a contrary sense.

THE RISKS OF ASYLUM LIFE.

Dr. J. A. Campbell lately addressed a letter to the *Lancet*, in which he showed how many hardships are endured by those engaged in the treatment of bodily and mental disease. He traced the life-history of a medical man through his training to practice, and alluded to the risk of infection at post-mortem examinations or in fever wards. He specially drew attention to the services rendered by army surgeons and their inadequate recognition, and stated that he had asked for particulars as to injuries, &c., from forty-five English asylums in 1897. Dr. Campbell found that several medical officers had been seriously attacked. Lately two have had to retire owing to the results of injuries inflicted by patients. He referred to the murder of Commissioner Lutwidge, the narrow escape of Dr. Wiglesworth, and the injury to Dr. Merson. We congratulate Dr. Campbell