

even French asylums, and we are not, unhappily, the only ones who hold this view.

"One of the King's visitors, who has most conscientiously fulfilled his duty of inspection and oversight, is entirely of our opinion. 'I should fail altogether in my duties,' he writes, 'if I abstained from adding that I am firmly convinced that the lunatics confined in the greater number of asylums are neglected in a most deplorable way as regards medical treatment. This service, as it is organised at present, is quite insufficient, not to say completely worthless. The one doctor (his consultant [adjoint] is only an ordinary practitioner), to whom the care of hundreds of lunatics is entrusted, cannot be equal to his task, more especially as outside practice occupies the greater part of his day, and he only gives up his surplus time to the asylum, that is to say, about two hours a day. Also he limits himself to giving his attention to incidental maladies of the inmates without attending to the actual ailment from which they suffer, and still less without attending to the moral régime, which is an all important thing in asylums.' The King's visitor ends by saying: 'It is not the first time that I have drawn attention to this state of affairs, which constitutes a real scandal, but always with the same lack of success.' Now, as the perfectness of its medical service ought to be the principal aim of the work of a sanatorium, I am therefore justified in asserting that private enterprise is incapable of securing this end in accordance with the conditions which science demands."

A VISIT TO THE BICÊTRE.

Before spending a short time in Paris in September last I had provided myself with an introduction to M. Bourneville. As I had feared, however, he was on holiday during my stay, and his well-known Saturday demonstrations were in abeyance. Any interest, therefore, attaching to my experiences depends on the fact that, unlike the majority of visitors, I saw the Bicêtre in its everyday condition and without preparation.

Many centuries ago an English prelate built a palace on an eminence of the rolling ground south of Paris, a stone's throw from the modern fortifications. Its traces have long since disappeared, but the name Winchester survives in the corrupted form of Bicêtre, and the Hospice des Aliénés stands on the aforesaid episcopal domain. The tramway of the Rue de Fontainebleau leads to the foot of the hill, and a few minutes' walk brings the visitor to the main gate of the institution, fronting eastwards. Arriving early, I was told that M. Bourneville's deputy would not be there for an hour or more, so that I had leisure to stroll through the quadrangles and note the outdoor life of the asylum.

A great boulevard, paved with large irregular slabs of granite, leads from the east gateway through the three main squares. It is flanked by wide dusty footpaths, worn and uneven, about which are scattered numerous bare wooden benches. Further back are grass-plots, shut off by a low trellis-work, planted with trimmed, flat-topped trees, and bordered by masses of geranium and fuchsia, picturesque, but untidy. The buildings, of dull yellow stone, vary in height, owing to additions, from two to four stories; with their flaking whitewash, blistering paint, and generally unclean appearance they suggest some huge overgrown provincial inn of Southern France. The greater portion of the asylum, which contains 3000 male beds, is devoted to the aged of more or less sound mind, and corresponds to an English workhouse. The department for imbecile children, of which more anon, is lodged in out-buildings to the south-west.

The morning of my visit was bright, and as the early chill of autumn passed off the inmates began to hobble out and dispose themselves to smoke and doze in the sun. Every variety of human wreck was represented, but the aged were in the majority, young adult imbeciles being few and senile demented in plenty. Many were hemiplegic or paralytic, and provided either with bath-chairs or with a curious form of go-cart, consisting of an oblong wooden frame with four small wheels, and fitted with a seat for the patient's occasional rest. There was no uniformity as regards dress, all descriptions being in evidence from hat to footgear. The commonest consisted of a thick rough jacket, trousers, and peaked cap of French grey, with a collarless shirt of unstarched calico; but every concession had been made to individual prejudice; one

man wore a straw hat with no ribbon, another a thick coat over three waistcoats. As far as I could see, however, clean faces and necks were universal. The general condition, facial expression, and deportment of the inmates differed but little from those seen in our imbecile asylums and workhouses, and suggested indifference and content in about the usual proportions. The paucity of senile ophthalmia cases was noteworthy. The attendants, whose caps bore the letters A.P. (assistance publique), seemed to be kind and considerate. They wear badges of rank on the arm. The children of the married staff were playing about the courts, dogs strolled here and there, and there were two tobacco stores at the inmates' disposal; altogether the social failure of Paris must feel that his surroundings have been made as homelike as possible in the Bicêtre.

M. Bourneville's deputy proved to be a most courteous and considerate gentleman, who spared no pains in showing me the children's department, which was my objective. We passed through the second court, with the chapel on its south side, and, turning to the left in the third, reached the series of modern blocks devoted to imbeciles under eighteen. The circular stone prison, with its deep surrounding ditch, reminiscent of an ancient donjon-keep, at the back of the third court, was in former days the acute hospital, but the supply of attendants was never sufficient for treating this class of case, and after the building had twice been set on fire by patients it was devoted to other uses.

The children's blocks, a series in yellow brick with narrow intervening flower-gardens, accommodate several hundred boys. The first ward we inspected was the infirmary, a somewhat gloomy apartment on the ground floor, bare and comfortless in appearance, with loosely-set wood parquet paving and dingy white curtains. The nursing did not impress me as being up to the highest standard. Passing to a ward for wet and dirty cases, we found the children sitting out on a spacious shaded verandah, each kept by day permanently on a commode chair padded and covered with American cloth. The next department—the cells,—a separate outbuilding fronted by a small gravelled enclosure, consists of a row of seven or eight single rooms, some of them padded. These are used for children with attacks of acute mania, and also for troublesome and unruly ones as a measure of discipline. Each has a closet-seat in one corner, a window high in the wall, and a roof ventilator; the two latter can be worked from the corridor. The isolation block is a cleanly and well-ordered building, in which apparently effective seclusion of contagious cases is managed by means of glass partitions, roof-high.

As it was holiday-time no school work was in progress, but I was shown the main schoolroom, excellently equipped, with a magic-lantern outfit, and many exhibits of the children's manual work. With the gymnasium I was not much impressed, but here again mid-vacation may have been accountable for the state of affairs. The refectories, with veined marble tables, were clean and attractive, and the food appeared to be excellent and well served. I saw the majority of the imbeciles playing in the paved courtyards; they seemed cheerful and contented, but lacked the ruddy cheeks and plumpness typical of Darent children.

Those who are familiar with the Parisian and with his management of hospitals and municipal institutions generally will recognise many national characteristics in the Bicêtre, and could perhaps concoct *a priori* much of the foregoing brief description. I am content to believe that in order to learn the most valuable lessons the asylum has to teach one should visit it when M. Bourneville's educational method is in full working activity. F.

THE AUXILIARY ASYLUM AT YOUGHAL.

The following appeared in the *British Medical Journal* for October 29th, 1904.

CORK DISTRICT LUNATIC ASYLUM.

"At the last monthly meeting of the Committee of Management the Resident Medical Superintendent again had to report that the monthly admissions were above the average, one being an emigrant from Queenstown. At present there are in the Asylum 1622 and 383 in the Auxiliary at Youghal. The male side has