

half the cases suffering from some form of physical disease for which medical treatment was required. 25 of the cases admitted were over 60 years of age. One of the patients admitted was a woman who had pleaded guilty at her trial for the wilful murder of her two infant children and was sent to the asylum under Section 15 of the Act 25 & 26 Vict., cap. 51. The medical superintendent, in reference to this case, writes as follows: "No opinion is expressed here as to the regularity of the legal procedure followed in this case, but a protest must be raised against what appears to be a growing tendency to make use of asylums as convenient houses of detention for dangerous criminals. The modern asylum is essentially a hospital; its arrangements are not designed to meet the requirements of a gaol, and, in so far as its conditions are made to resemble those of a prison, its efficiency as a hospital must suffer. It is most unfair that respectable members of a community sent to the institution for medical treatment should be forced into association with malefactors and murderers and the presence of such persons in the wards is keenly resented by the patients." 38 patients were discharged during the year, 26 (11 males and 15 females) as "recovered," 11 (six males and five females,) as "relieved," and one woman as "not improved." The recoveries as compared with the admissions give a proportion of 35·1 per cent. (23·4 males and 55·5 females). In 80·7 per cent. of the recoveries the mental disorder was of less than three months' duration on the patient's admission into the asylum. The number of deaths (38) is the highest recorded since the opening of the institution. The rate of mortality calculated on the average number on the register was 11·5 (10·2 males and 12·7 females), but Dr. Johnstone states that examination shows that there is nothing alarming in the high figures, which must be regarded as purely accidental. Pulmonary tuberculosis was present in active form in 28·9 per cent. of the deaths. The medical superintendent draws attention once more to the fact that the legislature has not yet made any provision for the granting of retiring allowances to the staffs of the Scottish district and parochial asylums. Statutory power has been given to grant more or less adequate pensions to the officials of the English county and borough asylums, the Irish district asylums, and the Scottish Royal asylums. Scottish asylum workers have exactly the same kind of duties to perform and they run the same risks as the employees in other asylums. They receive no compensation for the lack of pensions in the shape of higher wages and salaries or otherwise, their remuneration being such as to render it impossible for them to make adequate provision for old age or infirmity; and it is well known that of all public employments asylum service is the most anxious and responsible and the most dangerous to the health of body and mind. The new female wing of the asylum was opened on Nov. 26th, 1906, and the Commissioner in Lunacy, Dr. J. Fraser, states in his report that it is of a highly satisfactory character and suitably and comfortably furnished. He further draws attention in his report to the excellence of the two hospital sections for sick and infirm patients, and to the great advantage that the asylum derives from having four certificated hospital nurses, the matron, the deputy matron, the assistant matron on duty in the male sick ward, and the assistant matron who acts as night superintendent. The present rate of board for pauper patients is £29 per annum. The garden account shows a favourable balance of £189.

Leicester Borough Asylum (Annual Report, 1906-07).—On Jan. 1st, 1906, there were 815 patients (350 males and 465 females) on the registers of this asylum. The admissions during the year were 221 (85 males and 136 females). Dr. J. E. M. Finch, the medical superintendent, reports that the number of admissions from Leicester itself of both sexes, but especially of males, has been higher during 1906 than in any former year, the admission rate for the previous four years having been stationary. He further adds that should this increase continue more accommodation on the male side will be necessary, though there will be ample room on the female side for several years. Amongst those admitted, insane inheritance was found to be present in 50 instances, intemperance in 21, domestic trouble in 18, congenital defects in nine, and senile decay in 13. During the year 122 patients (57 males and 65 females) were discharged and of these 82 (32 males and 50 females) were considered "recovered," 21 (nine males and 12 females) "relieved," and 19 (16 males and three females) "not improved." In the discharges the percentage of the recoveries on the admissions, excluding those cases transferred from other asylums, is found to be 38·1 in the males and 47·6 in the females. The deaths during the

same period were 74 (38 males and 36 females), which gives a rate of mortality estimated on the average number of patients resident in the asylum of 10·9 in the males and 7·3 in the females. The chief causes of death were general paralysis in 13 cases, other cerebral lesions in 12, cancer in three, pulmonary tuberculosis in five, heart disease in 16, and senile decay in eight. Of the 840 patients remaining in the asylum at the end of the year 1906 29 (12 males and 17 females) were deemed to be curable. The total number of epileptic patients under treatment was 128. There were several changes during the year in the staff of the asylum. Amongst the medical officers, the second assistant medical officer unfortunately met with a fatal accident while cycling, and Mr. C. H. Gibson Lyall has been appointed to take his place. Dr. Finch reports many changes among the members of the nursing staff, and the Commissioners note in their report that the duration of service, although as good as in many asylums, cannot be considered satisfactory in view of the fact that 27 per cent. have served less than one year. During the winter the usual lectures on ambulance and nursing have been given, 14 attendants and 19 nurses obtaining the certificate and two attendants and nine nurses the medallion.

Looking Back.

FROM

THE LANCET, SATURDAY, Feb. 20th, 1830.

M. CHABERT.¹

THE following note was received by the EDITOR on Monday last; can any of our Correspondents suggest an appropriate reply? If M. Chabert has no antidote for prussic acid, it is quite evident that he has impudence enough for anything.

"M. Chabert requests Mr. Wakley will give him that satisfaction which is due to a gentleman, for the recent unprovoked, malicious, and unjust attacks against his character."

Saturday noon, Thomas Street,
Waterloo Road, Lambeth.

T. Wakley, Esq., Bedford Square.

¹ Vide "Looking Back" in THE LANCET of Jan. 18th, p. 172; Feb. 1st, p. 383, and Feb. 8th, 1908, p. 435.

VITAL STATISTICS.

HEALTH OF ENGLISH TOWNS.

IN 76 of the largest English towns 8648 births and 5798 deaths were registered during the week ending Feb. 15th. The mean annual rate of mortality in these towns, which had been equal to 18·2 and 18·3 per 1000 in the two preceding weeks, showed a further slight increase to 18·6 in the week under notice. During the first seven weeks of the current quarter the annual death-rate in these towns averaged 18·5 per 1000; the rate in London during the same period did not exceed 18·1. The lowest annual death-rates in the 76 towns last week were 6·0 in King's Norton, 6·9 in Hastings, 7·9 in Hornsey, and 10·2 in Grimsby; the rates in the other towns ranged upwards to 25·5 in Stockton, 25·8 in Rochdale, 26·3 in Merthyr Tydfil, and 31·4 in Yarmouth. The rate in London last week did not exceed 19·0. The 5798 deaths registered in the 76 towns during the week under notice showed an increase of 106 upon the number in the previous week, and included 388 which were referred to the principal epidemic diseases, against 441 and 447 in the two previous weeks; of these, 154 resulted from whooping-cough, 78 from measles, 47 from diphtheria, 43 from diarrhoea, 40 from scarlet fever, and 26 from "fever" (principally enteric), but not one from small-pox. The deaths from these epidemic diseases in the 76 towns were equal to an annual rate of 1·2 per 1000, the rate from the same diseases in London being 1·1. No death from any of these epidemic diseases was registered last week in Tottenham, St. Helens, Wigan, King's Norton, or in eight other smaller towns; the annual death-rates