

Cheshire councils are moving in the matter. At the meeting of the former on August 7th Sir John Hibbert moved the adoption of the report of the special committee appointed to consider the best method of appropriating the sum of £10,000 voted out of the county fund to commemorate the King's coronation. The committee unanimously recommended that it should be devoted to the establishment of an institution for the treatment of cases of consumption arising in the administrative county. Sir William Houldsworth, while agreeing, doubted the possibility of doing much with so small a sum, and suggested that it might be possible to come to some arrangement with the hospital which Mr. Crossley is providing for Manchester and Salford in Delamere Forest. After some discussion Sir John Hibbert agreed that the matter should be postponed. At the meeting of the Cheshire county council held on the same date Mr. W. Hodgson drew attention to the same subject and spoke of the "magnificent sanatorium in Delamere Forest" provided by the munificence of Mr. Crossley. He thought, however, that the Cheshire council might be able "to do a sufficient thing, probably at somewhat less cost, and spreading the cost over the whole county it would not be much for each authority." The public health committee of the council had thought that nothing could be done unless notification were compulsory, but on inquiry at the Local Government Board this was found to be an error. The report of the committee to the effect that it was desirable for a sanatorium or sanatoriums to be established in the county was approved and it was agreed to send it to the local authorities together with the gist of the letter from the Local Government Board. With regard to Sir William Houldsworth's suggestion as to negotiating with the Delamere hospital it should be remembered that the Liverpool sanatorium is not much more than half a mile away and it does not seem desirable to bring too many of these institutions to the same locality. Lancashire has many most salubrious sites quite as good as that of Delamere.

SOME ADVANTAGES OF A RAINY SEASON.

THE summer of 1902 so far has been horrible. It is the more unfortunate that it has been so as it was the year set apart for great national rejoicings. To the majority it may be a source of satisfaction that grumbling is justifiable, and he who can cast about for and find a few redeeming features in regard to the excessively unpropitious weather which we are experiencing proves the possession of virtuous content. One fact may prove a solatium, and that is that it was impossible to run away from the weather by leaving England, for equally bad, and in some cases a good deal worse, weather has been the rule apparently over the whole world. Certainly in many places where highly favourable weather so often obtains the conditions have been worse than those prevailing in the British Isles. Italy, for example, has been visited with snowstorms and a cold season has been recorded which for its bitterness appears to be without precedent. Other countries reported to be commonly blessed with sunny skies have shared the same experience. In this fact, perhaps, may lie a crumb of consolation, but it is small. Greater consolation surely may be found in the fact that in London, at any rate, and in many other big manufacturing towns the almost torrential rain which has been experienced during the last few days has provided us with a wonderfully clean and clear air. The freshness and transparency of the air of London are well-known effects of a sharp rainstorm. The continual bombardment of the air by millions of pure water-drops exerts a mechanical effect, a physical effect, and a chemical effect, all of which play a part in a hygienic purpose. There is the mechanical effect of removing suspended

particles—dirt, dust, smoke, micro-organisms—and carrying them to earth; there is the physical effect of a difference of electric potential being relieved, removing a stress responsible perhaps for headache and a depressed feeling; and finally, there is a very important chemical effect by which the air is freshened. There is no doubt that the rapid passage of water-drops through air exerts a bracing effect upon it, which is probably due to the formation of peroxide of hydrogen which gives invigorating properties to the air, and, as is well known, will easily destroy unseen impurities. These interesting facts, though affording, perhaps, feeble consolation to those who have gone to seaside and other places where the air is naturally pure, are probably of the greatest moment to those busy workers compelled to remain in the industrial hives of the towns, for by abundant rain a close, grimy, stifling atmosphere is thoroughly washed and freed from all impurities and made healthy, bracing, and bright.

MENTAL DISORDERS OF CHILDREN.

PROFESSOR F. X. DERECUM of Philadelphia has contributed to the *Philadelphia Medical Journal* of July 19th and 26th last an important paper on the mental disorders of children in which an attempt is made to reduce to order from a condition of something like chaos this complicated and somewhat neglected subject and to point out some of the natural characteristics and affinities of the groups of nervous affections concerned. Childhood is taken as embracing the period from birth to puberty. It is pointed out that idiocy and imbecility are met with in children, but that insanity as ordinarily understood is rare. The following four classes of idiots are recognised—viz., first, idiots with morphological anomalies of cranial, facial, and bodily formation, but without gross destruction of parts of the brain—e.g., those of the microcephalic and "Mongolian" types; secondly, idiots with gross cerebral lesions resulting in paralysis and contractures—e.g., many epileptic, paralytic, syphilitic, and traumatic cases of idiocy; thirdly, cretins; and, fourthly, amaurotic idiots belonging to the "family" type. With this last form of idiocy several children of one family are affected. As a rule, adds Professor Dercum, nothing special is noted in patients of the last class until the child is about six months old, when arrest and deterioration of development supervene in association with progressive blindness and death follows shortly after. This affection is essentially progressive, and destructive changes have been described as present in the nerve-cells of the cerebral cortex, basal ganglia, and spinal cord. The last two forms of idiocy enumerated above are, says Professor Dercum, distinctive forms which bear no relation to the first two forms or to each other. Children, it is pointed out, suffer quite frequently from delirium and mental confusion and occasionally also from stupor. These three forms of mental disturbance constitute another group of the mental affections of childhood. Such disturbances may occur as the result of febrile disease, shock, injury, fear, or prolonged excitement. Vivid hallucinations are developed and the child appears to be in a condition of unreasoning fright or terror. Melancholia, mania, and progressive systematised delusions like those of paranoia form a third group of affections. They are met with rarely in childhood, probably because of the incompletely developed condition of the brain and ego before adolescence. Insanity may be foreshadowed in childhood but is seldom developed until after puberty. Suicide in children is very rare as an outcome of melancholia. Some children exhibit neurasthenic symptoms in the form of abnormal fears, painful indecision, and strong impulses to destructive and criminal acts. Such symptoms, vague at first, may prove to be the prodromata of a serious form

of mental degeneration coming on in after years—viz., dementia præcox. At the approach of puberty such children are liable to exhibit periods of great exaltation and depression of spirits or of intellectual precocity and promise. Within a few months or in one or two years, however, signs of mental dulness and deterioration will appear. If concomitant physical disturbances, such as insomnia and cephalalgia, loss of appetite and feeble circulation, are present there is danger of threatened mental breakdown and dementia. The most potent favouring cause of insanity in these cases is the presence of an hereditary taint. The case will then probably develop into one or other form of dementia præcox, which constitutes another group of the mental affections of childhood or youth. Among the "neurasthenic" group of symptoms Professor Dercum also includes incorrigible tendencies to vagabondage and prostitution in young persons of both sexes. It is important, concludes Professor Dercum, that all neurasthenic symptoms should be diagnosed and treated early. Children with finer intellectual endowments than their fellows require especial care when suffering from such symptoms, and their treatment should consist mainly in rest from work or study, out-of-door living and occupation, massage and hydro-therapeutics, a generous diet, and the administration of tonics and laxatives to correct anæmia and to prevent the accumulation of auto-intoxication products in the bowel. In cases with a tendency to stupor good results have sometimes followed thyroid medication.

THE PISTOL AGAIN.

WE have not referred to this subject recently, but the newspapers on Monday, August 18th, contained details of no less than three revolver tragedies, which so forcibly illustrate the dangers caused by the unrestricted sale and carrying of firearms that we desire to call special attention to them. The first case is that of the gentleman who was shot in Gloucestershire by a friend with whom he was bicycling, after which the murderer travelled to London and committed suicide at a hotel. Two deaths are thus recorded with regard to which the unrestricted carrying of the revolver is the important point, for the position of the parties suggests that the mere cheapness of firearms was not a fact which influenced them. This points to the desirability of a licence for carrying pistols being issued upon terms implying some publicity and more inquiry into the character of the applicant than is the case with a gun licence. In this instance, it will be observed, two pistols played their part, for the murderer left the first at the scene of his crime but had no difficulty in surreptitiously borrowing another from his brother on returning to London. It would be difficult to suggest that revolvers are necessary articles which these gentlemen lawfully carried for some useful purpose. In the second case to which we call attention a man at Coventry employed in the cycle trade called at a house where his wife was employed as a nurse in order to persuade her to resume cohabitation with him. This she refused to do, so he proceeded to shoot her, inflicting a severe wound, while he followed his attempt at murder by killing himself. We ask if there is any reason why a man such as this should be able to buy a pistol for 5s. without any questions being asked as to his identity, his character, or his intentions? In the third case, which was reported in the evening newspapers upon the day mentioned, a ship's cook was charged at the Thames Police-court with attempting to murder a flower girl who had refused to marry him, with causing bodily harm to two other flower girls, and with attempting to commit suicide. The prisoner, according to the evidence given, shot the first girl after calling her towards him, pursued the others as they ran away, firing several shots at them, of which two took effect, while the others apparently spent themselves in the

public street without happening to do any harm, and then, so we gather, a miss-fire prevented the final tragedy. As these cases are all still the subject of inquiry we add no more with regard to them except to express a wish that juries should realise in all cases the unnecessary ease with which firearms can be bought and the danger thus inflicted on the community. Juries' presentments are not perhaps very effective in promoting legislation, but they play their part in calling attention to scandals and have some influence on public, if not on official, opinion. Three deaths and four woundings make a long list to be recorded in a single day, and no doubt many such cases do not find their way into the London newspapers, to which alone upon this occasion we have referred.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF PLAGUE.

A TELEGRAM from the Governor of the Mauritius, received at the Colonial Office on August 16th, states that for the week ending August 15th there was 1 case of bubonic plague and no death. As regards Egypt, a Reuter's telegram from Cairo, dated August 17th, states that the total number of cases since April 7th is 279, of which 156 have ended fatally. As regards Hong-Kong a telegram from the officer administering the Government, received at the Colonial Office on August 19th, states that for the week ending August 16th there were 12 cases of plague and 12 deaths.

THE BRITISH PHARMACEUTICAL CONFERENCE AT DUNDEE.

A VERY successful meeting of the British Pharmaceutical Conference was held in Dundee during last week. The proceedings commenced by an address from the President, Mr. G. C. Druce, M.A., F.L.S., which was delivered on Tuesday evening, August 12th, before a large gathering in the Dundee University College. On the last occasion of the visit of the members of the British Pharmaceutical Conference to Dundee, which was in 1867, the late Professor Bentley was elected President, and he chose for his address the subject of botany considered practically and scientifically as an aid to the pharmacist. Since that time the business of the pharmacist has, like most other businesses, felt the pressure of increasing competition, and nowadays it is but few pharmacists who have the opportunity of devoting any time to the study of systematic botany, however much that study may be calculated to enlighten him as to the medicinal properties of plants. To the modern pharmacist, unless such study be a hobby, it would mean the absorption of so much time which he could otherwise devote to the subjects—to mention one, chemistry—which more closely concern the practical side of his vocation. The President of the Pharmaceutical Conference this year, on the occasion of its thirty-ninth annual meeting, like the President of the last meeting held in Dundee in 1867, is an earnest student of systematic botany and it might have been expected therefore that he would endorse much that the late Professor Bentley had to say on the previous occasion, and such was the case. He described the progress of Scottish botany, mentioning the work of botanists in Scotland, and in alluding to the Scottish flora stated that Scotland has practically three-fourths of the plants known to grow in the British Isles. He concluded with some remarks emphasising the intellectual value and physical gain which the student of field botany might derive from a study of botany in the field. Such a study was not demanded for examinational purposes but it developed the powers of observation, stimulating the faculty of exploration, and was thus calculated to "lighten to some extent the gloom of ignorance which enshroud some of Nature's problems." At the business section of the meeting a series of excellent papers were read and discussed.