

How far from their breeding pools can the adults distribute themselves? Is *Anopheles* common enough to explain all the malarial fever here? I hope to give some observations on these points in my next letter.

P.S.—The following experiment has just (September 8th) been completed: A drachm of kerosene oil was poured on a puddle about a square yard in area. All the *Anopheles* larvæ were found dead after six hours.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS IN LUNACY FOR 1898.

INCREASE OF PAUPER LUNATICS.

The opening paragraph of the Commissioners' report discloses the fact that on January 1st, 1899, there were 105,086 lunatics in England and Wales under their official cognisance, being an increase of no fewer than 3,114 upon the number on January 1st, 1898. This is the largest annual increase ever recorded, and considering the steady rise year after year in the number of the insane in the British Isles it becomes a serious question for the ratepayers to consider how this accumulation of nervous breakage can be best provided for, having due regard to economy, and to the scientist and alienist physician as to what steps can be taken to check the progress of the various forms of mental disease. The class chiefly affected is without doubt the inmates of the county and borough asylums, the pauper lunatics as they are called, where the increase stands at 2,868 for the twelve months.

PRIVATE PATIENTS.

Private patients—that is, those in private or in public institutions, or in single care—not supported by the rates, only increased by 231, and criminal lunatics by 15. As showing the tendency of later lunacy legislation, it is stated that the number of private patients received into county and borough asylums has increased by 180. In many cases where the means of the patient and his friends admit a laudable effort is made to pay for his maintenance as a private patient rather than allow him to be branded as a pauper, and this proper feeling is now largely encouraged by the Committees of these asylums providing the necessary accommodation at a very reasonable rate, as they are empowered to do by Act of Parliament.

CRIMINAL LUNATICS.

With regard to criminal lunatics the Commissioners comment strongly upon their being sent to "county or borough asylums, where they of necessity mix on equal terms with the ordinary patients," which, they say, is very generally felt to be a hardship to the latter, while it often introduces an element of danger, strongly militates against the order and discipline of the asylum, and, moreover, induces among the other patients a feeling of being detained for punishment. The Commissioners express the hope that, as Broadmoor is fully occupied, such additional accommodation may be provided by the State as will enable the worst cases of criminal lunacy (those criminals who after conviction for serious crime, and being sentenced to penal servitude or long terms of imprisonment become insane) to be treated elsewhere than in an ordinary asylum.

RATE OF RECOVERY.

The rate of recovery is 36.87 per cent. of the total number of admissions as compared with 38.35 per cent. in 1897. This however is not so unfavourable as would appear at first sight when we consider that the total fresh admissions (not recurring cases) in 1898 exceeded those of 1897 by 488 and exceeded the annual average numbers in the ten years ending with 1898 by no fewer than 1,715. Again, in this connection it must be borne in mind that the recovery rate is largely influenced by the nature of the cases admitted, among whom the curable are still but a small proportion. It is a fact that in the majority of our asylum reports attention is drawn to the small number of curable cases in the institutions and the very unfavourable nature of the cases admitted, many of them being in an advanced state of disease other than mental or precluded from all hope of recovery by their great age, or by being congenital and hereditary cases, or chronic lunatics sent from workhouses. The general health of the various asylums throughout the

country has been satisfactory and the death-rate during the year (including deaths in idiot establishments) was 9.45 per cent. of the average daily number of patients. A favourable point worthy of mention is the fact that according to statistics the ratio of general paralytics to the general population is decreasing, as in 1887 it was 9 per cent. to the total number of patients admitted, while for the five years 1893 to 1897 it had fallen to 7.8 per cent.

SUICIDES.

The number of deaths by suicide in institutions for lunatics was 18, which the Commissioners consider to be small in comparison with the total number of patients under treatment, a large proportion of whom were affected with melancholia.

COST.

The average cost per head per week shows little variation, being 8s. 10d. in county asylums and 9s. 10½d. in borough asylums. This being reduced by the Government grant of 4s. per head per week shows the advantage financially to the Poor-law guardians in removing as many patients as possible to the county asylum rather than in retaining them in workhouses even though they are not suitable cases for the former institution.

FURTHER ACCOMMODATION NEEDED.

The question of providing more asylum accommodation is pressing hardly upon many counties and boroughs. Seventeen are building or contemplating the erection of new asylums, fifteen are making additions or proposing to make them, and the Commissioners state they have been reluctantly compelled to consent to the erection of temporary iron buildings for accommodation of patients at seven others in order to relieve pressing requirements. It is no use attempting to meet these requirements (which are becoming more and more urgent throughout the country) by half measures. Far better would it be to endeavour by enlightened methods not merely to put up huge blocks to hold accumulations, but to provide proper institutions for the cure and treatment of recent cases fitted with every modern appliance, and at the same time to make ample arrangements for the less costly care of the chronic and incurable.

MEDICAL STAFF.

The lines indicated by experience are to provide an ample estate of from 300 to 400 acres to give scope for outdoor occupation, amusement, and exercise, and upon this estate to erect a hospital for mental diseases fully equipped for 400 patients (200 males and 200 females), with an adequate medical staff sufficient to procure for each case distinct individual treatment, as in a general hospital, with every means for pathological research as well as clinical investigations, and with an out-patient department. The medical staff should devote its whole time to the study of insanity in all its forms, and not be trammelled with questions of administration, farming, gardening, and the like, or the details of organisation. All these would fall under the duties of the medical director, who would be the head of the asylum, and who would reside in a separate house midway between the hospital and a chronic block which would be erected purely for the care of the chronic and incurable, for say 1,000 or 1,500 patients. These by their labour would reduce the cost of the curative establishment. By some such scheme as this, more rapid advance might be expected in the knowledge and treatment of mental diseases and in the education of the medical profession generally. Any case in them found to be incurable would not be retained in the hospital proper beyond twelve months, but would be drafted off to the chronic block. Attached to the chronic block there would be an infirmary for the treatment of general diseases and chronic paralytics, etc. The knowledge and experience thus gained by such a continuous, systematic, and individual investigation of each case would point the way to prevention and cure, and would thus do more to arrest the ever-swelling numbers of our insane patients than the mere herding of them together for care and their prospect of cure.

PRESENTATION.—Dr. E. W. Orton has been presented with a carriage clock, and Dr. McGlashan with a reading lamp, by the members of the male and female classes in ambulance of the Bedworth Science and Art Classes, as a mark of their esteem and appreciation of the services rendered in instructing the classes.