

MERRICK, A. S., M.D., L.R.C.S.Ed., has been appointed Resident Medical Superintendent of the Donegal Lunatic Asylum, Letterkenny, *vice* Eames, appointed to the Cork District Lunatic Asylum.

STEWART, JAMES, B.A., L.R.C.P.Ed., L.R.C.S.I., ex-Surgeon, B.N., and late Deputy Medical Superintendent of the Cambridge County Asylum, has been appointed Second Assistant Medical Officer of the Kent County Asylum, Maidstone, *vice* Hughes, resigned.

TUKE, J. B., M.D., has been appointed Morisonian Lecturer on Insanity at the College of Physicians, Edinburgh.

WRIGHT, F., M.R.C.S.E., has been appointed Clinical Assistant at the West Riding Lunatic Asylum, Wakefield, *vice* Levinge, appointed Assistant Medical Officer to the Newcastle Borough Lunatic Asylum.

WOOD, THOMAS, M.R.C.S., has been appointed Third Assistant Medical Officer of the Kent County Asylum, Maidstone.

CORRESPONDENCE.

MATRONS IN LUNATIC ASYLUMS.

To the Editor of the Journal of Mental Science.

SIR,—On reading the review of the Asylum reports in the October number of the "Journal of Mental Science," I was somewhat surprised at the captious tone of the remarks on the report of the Matron of Hanwell Asylum as dealing with matters beyond her supposed sphere of duty, but it may be easily understood that a writer whose experience may have been limited to a Licensed House or a small Provincial Asylum with Matrons of the "Cook and Housekeeper" class cannot properly estimate the responsibilities devolving on the Matron of an Institution containing above 1100 female patients, and employing about 120 female officers and nurses, or the importance of the services of an educated and experienced lady; and I know that by none are the valuable services of the matron of Hanwell Asylum more highly appreciated than by the Medical Superintendents and staff of that Asylum.

In County Asylums the majority of the patients are females. Lunatics are increasing in number, and asylums are being continuously enlarged, and the growing importance of a higher order of female superintendents is obvious. Nowhere are the ministrations of a gentlewoman with tact and intelligence more valuable than in a Lunatic Asylum, and nowhere is male meddling more misplaced than when interfering with the employments and amusements of female patients, while the inconveniences resulting from the natural reluctance of females to confide their bodily ailments as well as their mental grief to a man are often very serious, whereas a matron possessing such qualifications as are indicated becomes the trusted friend of the patient and understands and soothes their waywardness. As regards the control and regulation of so large a staff of female officers and servants, the medical officers of Hanwell Asylum have too proper a sense of their professional status and authority to desire to intervene in the unavoidable jealousies and squabbles of the servants' hall.

All this may perhaps be admitted, but the grievous fact remains of a matron inditing a report of her department, and thereby assuming an official status and so approaching the awful supremacy of a medical superintendent. "As for her reading and writing, let that appear when there is no need of such vanity." Medical jealousy of female employment is well known, and redounds but little to the credit of a noble profession, which can well afford to give a fair field of peculiarly appropriate employment to women.

A VISITING JUSTICE OF HANWELL ASYLUM.

We willingly give insertion to this well-put plea for the nearly extinct species of lady asylum matrons. Theoretically the services of a lady matron may have all the value our correspondent attributes to them. If, however, he wishes to see a sketch

from life of the influence of the lady matron on the fortunes of the Hanwell Asylum, we would refer him to the last of Dr. Conolly's "Lectures on Lunatic Asylums" (p. 186), or to the concluding chapter of his later work "On the Treatment of the Insane." We extract from the later work, for the benefit of our correspondent, a sketch from life of the Hanwell Board Room, where to this day the vulgar jealousy of medical authority (as our correspondent unwittingly evinces in his letter) seems the predominant sentiment. "At the ordinary meetings of the committee (writes Dr. Conolly) the reports made by the medical officers scarcely receive the attention which their general importance should command, and they are sometimes treated as superfluous. A system, essentially vicious, by which reports are required from all the officers encourages counter-reports and contradictions which are mischievous. Not only is information sought for by the committee from the Chaplain, the steward, and farm bailiff, which may be necessary, but the assistant medical officers and the dispenser or apothecary, and the matron all make reports, and generally all make medical reports in which they are permitted to comment on the chief physician's report book, if there is a chief physician. Thus arise divisions and dissensions, which usually weaken the credit and disturb the peace of mind of them all. According to a well-ordered plan of government all the officers should report to a chief physician, and he alone in ordinary circumstances to the committee. One effect of these multiplied report-books is the introduction of unnecessary matter, and sometimes of trivial and of foolish details, leading to the loss of much time in mere desultory conversation unproductive of any good consequences whatever. A worse result is that sometimes, under sudden impulse, produced by a rash observation in some one or other of the minor reports, sudden determinations are arrived at by the committee without reference to the physician even when affecting some question which ought to be referred to him. He receives an official notification of these decrees with astonishment and mortification; but, fortunately, the resolutions passed so unreflectingly are often forgotten as soon as the impulse which occasioned them passes away, and are never acted upon."

We fear that the vicious system which has done so much harm to the Hanwell Asylum is still pleasing to the peculiar feelings which mark Middlesex magistrates alone among English magistrates.

To the Editors of the Journal of Mental Science.

GENTLEMEN,—At page 453 of the last number of the "Journal of Mental Science" the following sentence appears:—

"We are surprised to find it stated by one of the writers of these notes that the Sussex County Asylum was the first asylum in Great Britain in which chloral was used in the treatment of insanity. We always understood that any credit which might belong to the introducers of chloral into asylum practice was due to the Superintendent of the Devon Asylum."

If I am incorrect in believing that chloral was first used in this asylum, I hasten to declare my regret for the mis-statement. The matter can be very easily decided, as I can give the very day and hour on which the first dose was administered here. In our Case Book, vol. vi., occurs the following entry in the case of E. E.:

"1869, November 21st.—She is extremely restless and troublesome to-day, and was so all night, beating her head about, trying to choke herself with her fist, &c. To have fifteen grains of chloral. 22nd.—She went to sleep almost immediately after taking the chloral at 10 30 a.m., and slept almost without intermission until 5 p.m., when she awoke quite calm, and remained so." That was the first time chloral was used in this Asylum.

At page 630 of the "Journal of Mental Science," for 1869, there is an account of a "Clinical Discussion on Chloral." Dr. Blandford asks if any member had yet used it in Insanity. No one states that he has. But Dr. Lockhart Robertson, who was in the chair, and was then Medical Superintendent of this Asylum, says that he had received a pamphlet from Professor W. Westphal, strongly recommending its use. This led us to believe that chloral had not yet been used in an English