

The Law and Insane Murderers.

The legal procedure in cases of homicide by certified lunatics seems to be now clearly established in Scotland. Two murders occurred in two Scottish asylums last summer. The patients were dealt with in the same way. On intimation to the Procurator-Fiscal they were brought before the Sheriff, who, being assured of their mental unsoundness, remitted them to the higher courts. On their appearance there the advocate for the Crown intimated that they were insane, and led evidence to that effect by calling expert witnesses. The judge immediately ordered the lunatics to be removed to the Lunatics' Department of the Perth Prison and there confined during her Majesty's pleasure.

THE ENLARGEMENT OF RAINHILL ASYLUM.

We regret to observe that the Lancashire Asylums Board have decided to provide additional "temporary" accommodation at Rainhill for 200 patients. It is to be hoped that these buildings will be really temporary, and that the Board will remove them as soon as possible. The evils of these overgrown institutions have been so often the subject of unfavourable comment that we refrain from further remarks at present, except to express sympathy with Dr. Wigglesworth in having this unwelcome addition thrust upon him. We certainly cannot agree with Mr. Turner in his reported remarks to the effect that, as in a very short time the lunacy requirements of the county would be such as to occupy all the permanent provision that the Board anticipated making, as many of the asylums as could should make temporary accommodation. If the requirements transcend the possibilities under the arrangements now completed, it seems to us high time that the question of further permanent provision should be faced.

EDINBURGH DISTRICT LUNACY BOARD.

An important report upon asylums on the Continent and in England has been prepared by a committee of the Edinburgh District Lunacy Board, in view of the proposed new asylum for Edinburgh. It is a document of special interest to those interested in the provision of accommodation for the insane, and especially to us as an expression of opinion in regard to recent methods of asylum construction set forth by a body of gentlemen who approach the subject with open minds. The deputation returned impressed with the conviction that the asylum at Alt Scherbitz was the best they had seen, and that Edinburgh should adopt that system. The estate of Wester Bangour, near Uphall, extending to 861 acres, has been purchased for £13,000; and the District Board have resolved to construct their institution on the villa system, at an expense of some £150,000. We understand that the plans will be open to a limited competition, and we shall watch the development of this important hospital with great interest.

"THE GROWTH OF INSANITY IN SCOTLAND."

An article under this heading, "contributed" to *The Scotsman* of 8 December, 1897, draws attention to the existence of "crazy" areas in Scotland.

Thus, while the ratio of the insane in Scotland generally for the 1895 quinquenniad was 27.1 per 10,000, this is described as rising to 90 per 10,000 in the parishes in Argyllshire, but the writer does not draw attention to the fact that in the twenty-five remaining parishes the ratio must, on his own showing, fall below the average.

Craignish and Kilmelfort, with populations of 389 and 407, are stated to have a ratio of 170 per 10,000. This sounds very startling; but, when we recognise that the basis of the assertion consists of about thirteen lunatics, which two or three families might supply, it is not likely to cause serious alarm. These raw-baked statistics and reckless methods are unfair and misleading to the ordinary newspaper reader. What would be thought of a sanitary expert who seriously compared the health of the residential part of any town with that of its slums as an evidence of the unhealthiness of the whole district; or who drew conclusions from population groups of three or four hundred and applied them to a whole community? The contribution in question is unworthy of the subject in manner and matter, and not what we have been accustomed to find in the columns of *The Scotsman*.

A REQUEST FROM RUSSIA.

We have received a circular from Professor Bechterew stating that the clinique for mental maladies in the Imperial Military Academy of Medicine at St. Petersburg has now been opened for thirty years, and that a new separate building for nervous diseases will be inaugurated forthwith. It is proposed by the physicians in charge to create two museums, psychological and neurological, to commemorate this event. They ask for contributions of plans, reports, publications, photographs, etc., relative to asylums and their inmates, and for pathological specimens, preparations, apparatus relative to nervous diseases. Those willing to aid are instructed to address packages to "Russie, St. Petersburg, Clinique des Maladies Mentales et Nerveuses, Rue Samarskaya No. 9. The carriage will be paid by the recipients. Our Library Committee might take a hint and negotiate a fair exchange.

CORRESPONDENCE.

FROM DR. REID, ROYAL ASYLUM, ABERDEEN.

The installation of the electric light at the Aberdeen Asylum, at the time particulars were asked, was in an incomplete state, and is still so far from being finished that we cannot give definite information either as to the first cost or as to the cost of maintenance. The light has been in use in the Hospital buildings for over a year, and has recently been introduced into Elmhill House, there being in all about 700 lamps in use. It is not yet introduced into the Asylum main buildings, but will be as soon as the proposed reconstruction and alterations are completed, which, however, will not be for some years. When all is finished it is estimated that there will be from 1,500 to 1,600 lamps in use.

With regard to our generating plant for electric lighting, there are two 50 horse-power gas engines with heavy fly-wheels, running at 200 revolutions per minute, driving, by means of laminated leather belts, two dynamos, which are shunt wound, each with a maximum output of 36 kilo-watts. The current is continuous at a pressure of 110 volts. The E.M.F. in each dynamo is regulated by a resistance placed in the field magnet circuit with contacts for throwing more or less of it into circuit.

There is also a storage battery of sixty cells in leaden boxes, of 1,600 ampere hours' capacity on a nine hours' discharge, and a minimum discharge rate not exceeding 300 amperes. Recording ammeter and voltmeter are placed on the main switch-board.