

THE NEW SYSTEM OF NIGHT NURSING.

Dr. G. M. ROBERTSON read a paper on "The New System of Night Nursing," which was followed by a discussion.

LABORATORY OF THE SCOTTISH ASYLUMS.

Dr. CLOUSTON, on behalf of the Committee, made a statement regarding the work of the Pathological Laboratory. He mentioned that under the supervision of Dr. Ford Robertson the work is proceeding very satisfactorily, and that it is proposed to remove the laboratory from the buildings of the Royal College of Physicians to those of the Royal College of Surgeons in the course of the summer. He hoped that all the asylums of Scotland would be induced to join, on special efforts being made by those of their colleagues who had not as yet been successful in persuading their committees to support an institution of which they could not but approve.

A vote of thanks was given to Dr. Rutherford for presiding, and the meeting then closed.

PARLIAMENTARY NEWS.

LUNACY BILL.

The Bill to amend the Lunacy Acts, introduced by the Lord Chancellor and read a second time in the House of Lords on February 12th, is a measure consisting of 31 clauses and two schedules. It deals with such subjects as urgency orders, judicial authorities, and reception orders, the removal of lunatics to work-houses, disqualifications for signing medical certificates, visits to licensed houses, powers of dealing with the property of lunatics, the reception of boarders, the management of hospitals and their branch establishments, compensation to asylum officers for injury sustained in the discharge of their duties, the temporary care of incipient lunatics, and the jurisdiction of Masters in Lunacy. With regard to urgency orders the provisions are that the currency of the order shall be reduced from seven days to four, and that every order shall be accompanied by a statement, to be made and signed by the person who signs the order and by the medical practitioner who signs the medical certificate on which the order is founded, that it is necessary for the safety and proper treatment of the alleged lunatic or for the safety of others that he should be forthwith placed under care and treatment, and showing fully and specifically the reason why an order of this description is required. The disqualifications for signing medical certificates in support of a petition for a reception order are extended considerably. They are made to apply among others to persons in the employment of the licensee. Certain amendments have been introduced, as has been explained on p. 312, and the Bill has now been introduced into the House of Commons. Among the additions made in the House of Lords are a provision that the judicial authority shall in his report to the Commissioners state definitely whether in his opinion the detention is or is not proper, and another to the effect that the power of two or more local authorities to agree to unite in providing and maintaining a district asylum shall be construed as including a power to unite in providing and maintaining a laboratory for pathological research in connection with lunacy.

THE INEBRIATES ACT IN SCOTLAND.

There is in course of passage through the House of Lords a bill designed to strengthen the administration of the Inebriates Act in Scotland. It confers on the local authorities increased powers of assistance for the establishment and maintenance of inebriate reformatories, and it makes eligible for committal to these institutions persons convicted of drunkenness and disorderly conduct in a public place.

HOMES FOR INEBRIATES.

In answer to a question by Sir Charles Cameron, who called attention to the complaints of magistrates as to the want of homes except for Roman Catholics, the Home Secretary informed the House that the complaints were made under

some misapprehension as to the facts. In reality, 100 females and two males have been committed to, and received in, certified reformatories, and of these fifty-nine are Protestants. More accommodation is needed, and action is being taken by many local authorities with a view to providing it.

RECENT MEDICO-LEGAL CASES.

REPORTED BY DR. MERCIER.

[The editors request that members will oblige by sending full newspaper reports of all cases of interest as published by the local press at the time of the assizes.]

Reg. v. Flower.

James Flower, 37, greengrocer, was indicted for the murder of his wife. Prisoner appears to have been a sober man until a month before the murder. He then lost a horse, which he said drove him to drink. About midnight on November 2nd the prisoner was found in his shirt and drawers in the street by a policeman, to whom he said, "I've murdered the missus. She has poisoned my life. I have killed her." The woman was found dead from a wound in her throat. It was proved that since he became addicted to drink he had had suspicions of his wife's fidelity, had persisted that there was a man in the cellar, and had become very strange. Three doctors deposed that a few days before the murder he had visited them, and was then bordering on delirium tremens, and to one of them he had stated that his wife was poisoning him. Dr. Hunt, medical officer at the county gaol, said that on the day after the murder the prisoner said that someone was trying to murder him; that his head had been examined, and that the man who examined it was offering large sums of money for it. Subsequently he had said that his wife was concerned in a plot against him, and had been offered a large sum to poison him. Dr. Spence, of Burntwood, said that at the time Flower killed his wife he might have known that he was doing a wrong act, but he might have believed that there was some conspiracy against him, and that he had to defend himself against his wife. He would not know that he was doing a wrong act in the same way that a sane man would know. The judge (to prosecuting counsel): "On this evidence is it possible to submit to the jury that this is a case of wilful murder?" Guilty but insane.—Stafford Autumn Assizes, Dec. 4th—Mr. Justice Mathew.—*Times*, Dec. 7th, and *Manchester Guardian*, Dec. 5th.

The brief period for which this prisoner had been drinking complicated the case. If the murder had been committed after a single day's debauch he must have been found guilty of murder. If he had been drinking for months the jury would have had no difficulty in finding him innocent. But the fact that his drunken habits had lasted for only about a month made it difficult to decide whether the act was the outcome of ordinary drunkenness or of alcoholic insanity. No doubt the well-marked delusions saved him from the gallows.

Reg. v. Beddoe.

John Beddoe, 24, gunner in the militia, was indicted for the murder of a comrade named Hammett. Prisoner was a recruit, and was somewhat lacking in intelligence. He was made a butt of by the other men in the regiment, and orders had been given that if anyone molested him he was to be put in the guard-room, and he had been put in a tent next the company sergeant-major, so that the latter could keep an eye upon him and see that he was not bullied. He was in a tent with five other men, one of whom (the deceased) began to sweep the floor at a time when the prisoner was standing near the tent pole, upon which hung the belts and bayonets of the men. As deceased was sweeping he came near the prisoner, and told him roughly to get out of the way, at the same time giving him a blow on the shin with the broom. The prisoner immediately snatched one of the bayonets from its scabbard and, with a back-handed blow, plunged it into the right side of the deceased, who died shortly afterwards. The prisoner appeared stupefied when he saw what he had done, and upon being asked what had happened said "I have stabbed him." Subsequently he said, "I was cleaning my bayonet and he fell upon