to the discussion at the June meeting of the Obstetrical Society on serous perimetritis, a malady of much graver importance than flexion, in which it was evident that even on the primary question of diagnosis there was much to learn that could only be learned by careful necroscopic research. In the puerperal diseases, on the other hand, very much has been done by way of attention to morbid anatomy; and it is to this, I think, that we are chiefly indebted for the great stride made in our scientific knowledge of their course and results. In discussing puerperal fever, we feel, thanks largely to the researches of morbid anatomy, that we are now treading on far surer ground than was possible but a few years ago, although still, as to the nature of the poison whose pathways we can track, we have much to learn. And we may fairly hope that, with the aid of the many scientific observers now at work in our department of medicine, before long similar and equally appreciable progress may be made in the morbid anatomy of the uterus and its appendages.

But, gentlemen, I must detain you no longer from the real work of of the Section. You will all be anxious to hear the papers promised by the distinguished men who honour us with their presence to-day, and the subjects they have selected are of no less vivid interest than of practical and far-reaching importance.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF

THE SECTION OF PUBLIC MEDICINE,

At the Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association, held in Cardiff, July, 1885.

By DAVID DAVIES, M.R.C.S.,

Medical Officer of Health for Bristol; President of the Section.

VARIOUS IMPORTANT TOPICS IN PUBLIC MEDICINE.

As our friend and colleague, Mr. Jones Dyke, will deliver a special address on public health, I have thought it prudent not to attempt any elaborate or comprehensive address. I shall, therefore, refer only to a few points interesting to all of us who are connected with this Section.

During the last two or three years we have been looking, with some apprehension, on the threatening aspect of Asiatic cholera. Men, eminent in science, and celebrated for the originality of their investigations, have endeavoured to discover the real microbe which is supposed to be the immediate cause of the disease; but alas! when some of us, at least, thought that we had discovered our mysterious enemy, the cup was dashed from our lips; doubts of a serious character have overcast our hopes. One eminent investigator has been swallowing 'he "bacilli" of another equally eminent, to prove their innocence and inertness. Whilst the pioneers of our profession give us no certain sound to advance, we have to make the best use we can of the careful observations of those who have encountered this disease during former epidemics in this country or abroad. But, whilst scientific investigators have given us only unsatisfied aspirations, we may congratulate ourselves that one of the best features of our national character has come to the surface: practicality. Instead of harassing the trade and commerce of this great country, and inflicting untold hardships on weary travellers by the restrictions of useless quarantine-regulations, the Government authorities have substituted a minute and rigid inspection of all suspected ships and passengers approaching our coasts; and, in case the disease should elude our watchfulness, they have endeavoured, through the Local Government Board, to bring all districts, especially those most exposed to danger, to such a high state of sanitation, that the enemy, should it land, may find no foothold in this country.

Another matter which has much engaged my attention, as a health-officer, has been the registration of disease. By the last Registration Amendment Act, officers of health can get a weekly return of the mortality in their districts; but the returns, although correct transcripts of the entries on the official registers, present many difficulties for classification. A not inconsiderable proportion of them have not been certified by any medical attendant, and no coroner's inquest has been held on the deceased. These returns may at once be dismissed as worthless. Then, among the causes of death professionally certified, we have many anomalies and divergencies of pathological views, which show very clearly that we have not as yet attained unity

of creed, and that individual liberty of opinion is much respected in our profession; but, seriously speaking, these anomalies are a great hindrance to progress in sanitary science. For instance, the prevalence or absence of deaths from enteric fever in a district, indicates pretty accurately its sanitary condition, and the purity or otherwise of its water-supply; but when deaths of bed-ridden octogenarians, and of infants on the breast, are attributed to this disease, we accept them with serious misgivings; again, when tropical or subtropical diseases are returned as the causes of death of persons who have never been out of England, our confidence in the value of our statistics is somewhat shaken. The remarks I have made respecting the frequent anomalous nature of the returns for typhoid fever apply to tubercular phthisis, diphtheria, and many other diseases, the knowledge of which is important to a health-officer.

Time will not allow me to treat of the best way of increasing the reliability of our returns of mortality; the subject, I doubt not, does and will receive the consideration of those who preside over our education. I will simply add, that the facts which have suggested these remarks make me think that the abolition of the apprenticeship system was not an unmixed good. Our younger brethren are better anatomists, more learned physiologists, and more expert surgeons than some of us were; but those of us who had served country apprenticeships, could distinguish the different zymotics, and the ordinary diseases of a mixed community, with a considerable amount of accuracy before we entered the medical schools. We want some substitute for the abolished apprenticeship.

I approach the next point with some diffidence, because I have never taken more than a passing interest in political matters. Without any desire on this occasion to show any party bias or political proclivities, I consider the subject we all have so much at heart, which we in this Section specially cultivate—namely, the Public Health—of so much importance that we ought to be represented in the Imperial Parliament by a Minister of Health, and not remain as a mere appendage of a Poor-law Board. That great department which was ably administered by Mr. Simon, and is now ably administered by his successor, Dr. Buchanan, ought to be in direct relation with the nation, by means of a Minister of Health in the great national council. We have, and have had always, some members of our profession in Parliament, whose accomplishments would enable them to hold such a post with success and honour; and we are in hopes, apart from all political partisanship, to find in the next Parliament one or more members of this great Association so qualified.

Time forbids me to allude to more than one other pressing need of our profession, namely, a Government institution for conducting physiological, pathological, and chemical observations, for the advancement of Public Medicine; such institution to be under the control and direction of the best and most scientific observers whom the country can produce. At present, when danger threatens us, or when we hear of the discoveries of our brethren in other countries, we spasmodically rush to search for the source of the danger, or to imitate researches made in other lands. Such spasmodic action and hurried conclusions would be precluded by a permanent Department of State, always engaged in making researches in the direction of the public health. I confess the thought is not originally mine, but I owe it to the late Dr. William Budd. Before that great man's last illness, he often mentioned the matter to me; and at one time we had under our serious consideration the provision of a house for the reception of a large number of our nearest relatives in the animal creation—namely, monkeys—believing that experiments on our cousins of the forest would have much more important bearing on human pathology than experiments on guinea-pigs and dogs. But difficulties, which private individuals could not overcome, presented themselves; my friend's health began to decline, and we dropped the subject, but still in hopes that the next visitation of cholera would be utilised in some such way for the discovery of the hidden strength of that Indian visitor.

I need not more than allude to the number of most important questions in hygiene that wait for solution.

Cholera—what is it? We want definition of its different modes of propagation. To what extent, and under what conditions, is tubercular phthisis infectious? To what extent does tubercle in the cow affect the animal's milk? What relation, as cause and effect, has the milk of a tuberculous cow to mesenteric disease, tubercular meningitis, and other tubercular affections of infants and young children? What is the origin of true diphtheria? What is the line of distinction between the metabolic and non-metabolic infectious diseases? These, with many other important questions, wait for solution, which, I consider, the Imperial Government might forward. Much has been accomplished by the unselfish efforts of members of our profession;

but "there is much land yet to be possessed." I look forward, with fond anticipation, to a period (although I shall not see it) when scarlet fever, small-pox, and other zymotics, will be as much mere matters of history as the great plague and sweating-sickness in England; when the assurance of human life will be confined to a very narrow range, the central point of which will be 100 years.

These are bright anticipations; but, having regard to our progress in the past, they are, as I conceive, not altogether visionary. In anticipating such a happy consummation, which we, especially in this Section, are endeavouring to hasten, the words of the old song, which I used to sing when a youth, recur to my mind—

"There is a good time coming, boys;
We may not live to see the day,
But earth shall glisten in the ray
Of the good time coming."

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF

THE SECTION OF PSYCHOLOGY.

At the Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association, held in Cardiff, July, 1885.

By D. YELLOWLEES, M.D.,

Physician-Superintendent of the Glasgow Royal Asylum; and Lecturer on Insanity in the University of Glasgow.

THE CAUSES AND PREVENTION OF INSANITY.

My first duty is to acknowledge the great honour done me by the Council of the Association in inviting me to preside over this Section, an honour which I very highly appreciate, and which is doubly welcome because our meeting is held in the county whose asylum I organised and opened 20 years ago, and in whose service I spent 11 of the best years of my life.

At our last annual meeting, at Belfast, the subject of the presidential address was the relation of our speciality to the other branches of medicine. To-day, I invite your attention to our relation and duty to the public as regards the causation and prevention of insanity. This is a practical rather than a pathological aspect of our subject, but its extreme importance must atone for the want of purely scientific interest.

During the dark period when insanity was at once the reproach of medicine and the horror of the public, the mere suggestion that the nervous system required wise and watchful care was resented as an insult, because it seemed to impute a liability to mental disorder. Now that insanity is no longer deemed either a crime or a disgrace, there is some hope that the counsels and warnings of the physician may receive greater attention.

The causes and prevention of insanity may well be considered together, for prevention can be intelligent and effective only in proportion as the causes are accurately ascertained and wisely avoided.

The causes of mental disorder group themselves at once into two categories; those arising from conditions in the life-history of the individual, and those entailed upon him by ancestral inheritance. It is too true that both kinds of causes often co-exist, and that the immediate or personal cause is potent only because it has awakened and developed inherited weakness. Still, there are causes so directly personal to the individual, that they must be regarded as sole and sufficient, irrespectively of inheritance. The chief causes of this class are brain-injury, brain-exhaustion, brain-anæmia, brain-irritation due to disease in other organs, and organic changes in the brain itself. From such causes, any brain may suffer, and they may induce insanity in persons wholly free from hereditary neuroses.

Brain-injury is a cause often assigned by friends, without sufficient grounds, as the history of a blow or fall seems to them to remove all suspicion of hereditaryness.

Undoubtedly, mental peculiarities, or an entire change of character sometimes follow a blow which has left no outward sign; and it is equally certain that the commencement of organic disease, or of the chronic changes of general paralysis, may date from such an injury.

The mischief produced may be out of all proportion to the apparent severity of the blow, and therefore such injury should never be lightly regarded. On the other hand, it is a mere shot in the dark to assign as the cause of insanity a head-injury sustained some years previously, if it have meanwhile given rise to neither local irritation nor general

symptoms. Distance magnifies the gravity of the injury, and friends unconsciously mislead the physician and themselves in their desire to demonstrate the accidental origin of the disorder.

Brain-exhaustion may follow from continued overwork or incessant worry, if the brain have been denied due rest and sleep. The student, the politician, and the merchant, may alike be victims of brain-exhaustion, in their undue pursuit of knowledge, influence, or wealth.

This is too high a price to pay for anything on earth. Besides, such overwork often defeats its end, for the work of a wearied brain is never the best work of which it is capable. Our powers will bear spurring for a time; but there is a limit, beyond which the effort is fatally exhausting, while the result is woefully inadequate.

The amount of overwork habitually done, nowadays, in all departments of life, by the best and ablest workers, is appalling, and, they pitifully declare, inevitable. They do not seek this overwork for selfish or personal ends, but the work seeks them, and being set to them it must be done. It is done, often nobly done, but the cost is terrible. There is no time for healthful exercise or restful leisure; the happiness of the home-circle, the pleasures of friendship, the delights of nature, literature, and art, can be enjoyed only by snatches; life is an incessant rush to overtake the engagement of the passing minute; the day is too short for its duties, and the night must sacrifice largely of its sleeping hours. The very holiday, if a holiday be taken at all, is often accomplished in like fashion, and a hurried rush to the continent is vainly called rest. This feverish haste has been intensified by the greater rapidity of communication in recent years, and it implies a degree of nervous strain unknown to former generations. Reason and life are often sacrificed in the rush of our high pressure civilisation; and the influence of this civilisation, with its terrible extremes of reckless luxury and woeful want, on the national brain and the national character, is a momentous question. Assuredly it is our province and duty to proclaim that such flagrant violation of the laws of brain-health cannot be perpetrated with impunity, but must entail direful results.

Far commoner than exhaustion from overwork, and far more potent as a cause of insanity, is the irritation and exhaustion produced by excesses in the two most frequent forms of alcoholic and sexual dissipation. The ruin of brain wrought by intemperance, whether in its sudden and fiercer forms or in the chronic delusional conditions to which they tend, is too familiar. Too familiar, also, is the drink-crave, to gratify which, even for a moment, love and honour and truth and duty are all forgotten. This malady, which some would vainly persuade us is but vulgar vice, is often an inherited neurosis, and then belongs to the second category of causes; but often, too, it is the outcome of habitual indulgence, and thus ranks as a personal cause.

A man need not be a drunkard before he can develop insanity or transmit it to his offspring. If he indulge in "nips" throughout the day, or saturate himself with beer, or cannot go to bed without his grog, he is steadily creating constitutional tendencies which will some day develop evil results; and if he crown his sinful folly by giving alcohol to his children, he is preparing for them a double curse. There is no form of foolish indulgence which calls for stronger reprobation than the giving of wine to children. The only folly which approaches it in its evil results is the baneful delusion, that most women need alcohol at their monthly periods. Both these habits but manufacture drunkards, and demand our emphatic condemnation.

Brain-exhaustion from sexual excesses, or from self-pollution, is another fruitful cause of insanity, and it is wholly a false delicacy which hesitates to expose this degrading evil. We know too well how one prurient boy can pollute a whole school with the vice of self-abuse, though we can never know or measure the ruin he may have wrought. We are too often sadly certain that like practices exist in the sex where we expect only purity and innocence, and that they produce sorrowful results in all the protean forms of nerve-instability. We know, too, how the marriage-relationship can be degraded into an excuse for unbridled indulgence, and that such folly or ignorance may wreck the strongest brain.

Society needs plain words about these things, and we fail in our duty if we do not speak them. Especially do we need to impress on parents the duty of wisely informing their children, lest ignorance, or, still worse, knowledge wrongly sought for, prove fruitful of evil.

Brain-starvation, whether the anæmia result from malnutrition or from undue waste, may give rise to mental disturbance, which is, happily, curable by the removal of its cause.

Brain-irritation, due to disease in other organs, may produce insanity, either through nervous sympathy or through disturbance of the quality and regularity of the blood-supply. The occurrence of this secondary insanity often reveals the pre-existence of nerve-