

stated, was almost grotesque in its incompleteness. He did not wish to name the vegetable extracts the syrup contained, but he claimed that they all possessed distinct therapeutical qualities. The relation of aloe to the group of extracts in this preparation was as 25 to 181, which he thought sufficiently demonstrated the inaccuracy of the analysis in *Secret Remedies*. The witness was opposed to the suggestion that the formula or the active ingredients should be stated on the label of a proprietary medicine, and stated that the publication of particulars in *Secret Remedies* had led to imitation and interference with the trade of his company. He also claimed that proprietary medicines, on the whole, contained drugs of better quality than those dispensed by medical men to their poorer patients. In this connexion he referred the Committee to Dr. Hart's book, *How to Cut the Drug Bill*. His experience was that the censorship of advertisements in Australia had been futile.

The Chairman: On the question of extravagant claims, you claim that Seigel's Syrup is a cure for dyspepsia and liver complaints. Is that accurate?

The Witness: In the proper acceptance of the word "cure," yes. In the United States we have had to change the word "cure" to "remedy."

The Chairman: Is it true that Seigel's Syrup is a purely vegetable compound?

The Witness: The position with regard to hydrochloric acid in minute quantities is that it is put in so that it will maintain the vegetable extracts in a state of fine division and so make possible the maximum therapeutic effect. In reply to further questions, the witness stated that he was not aware that Seigel's Syrup was prohibited in Germany except on the prescription of a doctor.

THE MENTAL DEFICIENCY BILL.

WHEN Parliament rose in August the Standing Committee to which this bill had been referred had passed the first ten lines of the first clause.

On reassembling in October there were 27 pages of amendments to the remaining 67 clauses of the bill. The bulk of these, however, are drafting and non-contentious amendments or consequential on the fundamental changes proposed by the Government, and adopted by the Committee, in deference to adverse criticism of the original proposals in the bill in regard to the constitution of the central authority.

BOARD OF CONTROL.

It will be remembered that the Government had agreed in the summer to deal first of all with Clauses 1 to 5, which set up the central authority, and then to pass on to Clause 17, which defines the persons who are regarded as mentally defective, within the meaning of the Act, and the circumstances which are to render a mentally defective person subject to be dealt with under the Act.

As far as the central authority is concerned, the objections to the original proposals of the bill, to set up under the Home Office a totally new body of Commissioners, separate from, and in addition to, the Lunacy Commissioners, were set forth in these columns on the introduction of the bill, and it is a matter of satisfaction that these objections, which were generally held by the profession, and particularly by that section of it which is specially concerned with lunacy administration, have been for the most part removed by the Government amendments.

The meetings of the Standing Committee during the first few weeks of the autumn session have thus been devoted to such questions as the number of qualifications of the Commissioners, their mode of appointment, tenure of office, salaries and duties.

The following are the principal points settled by the Committee in regard to these matters:

The new body is to be known as the Board of Control. The paid Commissioners are to be twelve in number if necessary, but at present only eleven will be appointed. The four legal Commissioners, who may be practising barristers or solicitors, are to be appointed by the Lord Chancellor, the rest by the Home Secretary; thus the main responsibility is transferred to the Home Office. One of the three unpaid Commissioners and one of the

paid Commissioners are to be women. It is not required that the three additional Commissioners to be appointed, including the paid woman Commissioner, shall be medical practitioners.

So far as the profession is concerned, the addition to the numbers of the Commissioners and the single Board of Control will possibly meet with approval, and there appears to be nothing in other details that calls for special mention from this point of view.

It was not till the last day of October, after disposing of Clauses 1 and 2, that the Committee was able to turn its attention to Clause 17, which, read together with Clause 25, is undoubtedly the crucial clause of the bill.

REPEAL OF THE IDIOTS ACT, 1886.

At the outset, it is important to bear in mind that, before the Committee rose in August, Mr. McKenna announced the intention of the Government to insert a clause repealing the Idiots Act, 1886. The original draft of the bill expressly provided that nothing in this Act should affect any power exercisable with respect to idiots and imbeciles by the Commissioners in Lunacy or other persons under the Idiots Act; that is to say, some of these patients were to remain under the Commissioners in Lunacy, and some would come under the new Commissioners proposed by the bill. When it was decided to entrust the control of defectives of all kinds to one and the same central authority, it was clear that that authority would be dealing with idiots and imbeciles under three separate statutes, namely, the Idiots Act, the Lunacy Act, and the present bill. This would have led to overlapping and confusion in administration, and the Idiots Act had to go.

This decision, though recognized as inevitable, has been met with regret on the part of those voluntary institutions which have for many years carried on good work under its provisions. It was, perhaps, an anomalous and somewhat crude piece of draftsmanship; but its provisions were extremely simple, and on the whole worked very satisfactorily. Had the term "mental defective" been used throughout its title and provisions as was originally intended, and had monetary powers, such as are granted in the present bill, been added to it, it would probably have sufficiently met the needs of the case, and have rendered unnecessary the present demand for further legislation. As it is, from the very first defectives of all degrees have been received and trained in the institutions registered under its provisions, although the terms of the certificate militate somewhat against this, and there was no provision for the supply of adequate accommodation by local authorities. In view of the repeal of this Act it is very important that clauses should be introduced in the present bill to cover the hiatus thus created without undue disturbance to existing institutions, and in particular to provide against large numbers of idiots and imbeciles falling outside the bill, by reason of the fact that in most cases they do nothing to make themselves subject to be dealt with under Clause 17 (1) as now amended. The Home Secretary has expressed his intention to frame clauses dealing with this position of affairs. In this relation it may be well to call to mind the statement recently made by the Home Secretary that the Government does not propose that any person should be compulsorily detained in a home unless such person for some reason or other has already come in contact with the law or is being dealt with by the law.

A proposal was made by Mr. Dickinson that idiots and imbeciles should *inso facto* be subject to be dealt with under the Act, but this was rejected; it is therefore important that special provisions dealing with them should be framed.

The passage of Clause 17 was undoubtedly rendered smoother by the announcement made by the Home Secretary that he would move the omission of Subclause (1) (e), which made those defectives subject to be dealt with in whose case it is desirable in the interests of the community that they should be deprived of the opportunity of procreating children; and also of Subclause (1) (f), which empowered the Secretary of State to specify other circumstances which should make a defective subject to be dealt with under this Act.

The opinion of experts is that medical knowledge is not sufficiently advanced to afford definite guidance by which

the possible abuses that might occur under such a provision as the former could be obviated, and it is without surprise or regret that the profession views the disappearance of this proposal.

With regard to the latter, it appears to be unwise to leave such large powers to the Secretary of State without reference to Parliament, and in its place a subclause has been adopted by the Committee which empowers the Board of Control to specify in regulations circumstances which make persons injurious or dangerous to themselves or to the community, and so make them subject to be dealt with.

Any objection there might be to this has been removed by a further amendment proposed by Mr. McKenna to the effect that all regulations must be laid on the tables of both Houses of Parliament for thirty days before becoming valid.

Most of the hostile criticism directed against the bill has been in regard to these provisions, and though the opponents in Committee are not very numerous, they have found considerable support in the country, and their attack will be deprived of much of its force when the bill again comes before the full House, by the withdrawal of these paragraphs.

CHILDREN.

The very important question of the position of children under the Act came up on November 5th, and a statement was made by the Home Secretary of the general policy of the Government, which will be received with hearty approval by those who are most conversant with this difficult problem.

In the first place the Defective and Epileptic Children Act, 1899, is to be made compulsory. Hitherto its application has mainly been confined to a few urban districts. Moreover, owing to the insufficient provision for those children who were incapable of deriving benefit from mere schoolroom methods, these schools tended to be clogged with a class of children for whom they were not quite appropriate. The proper function of such schools is as a sorting ground or as a temporary provision to assist some children who are only backward and need temporary special assistance or as the best method of educating a certain grade of the feeble-minded throughout their school life, with the hope and prospect of preparing them sufficiently to take their place in the world.

These schools cost the ratepayer more for each child than the ordinary schools and it is highly desirable that no child should remain permanently in them who is not likely to derive the intended benefit from them. Any child removed to a home under the bill will still be a charge on the education authority. This will prevent any financial inducement to the authority to send children to homes without good cause; the education authority will have power to transfer a child to a home without the consent of the parents. Presumably this arrangement will only endure so long as the child is of school age, after which the control and responsibility of the education authority should cease.

The actual clauses carrying these proposals into effect have not yet been framed; at present all that has been passed in this respect is Subclause (d) of Clause 17, making all children discharged from a special school or class subject to be dealt with under the Act.

It is understood that in order to make the Defective and Epileptic Children Act compulsory, a separate bill will be required. Presumably, when this is brought in, the provision for homes under that Act will be modified or abolished, as they will be rendered superfluous by the present bill.

DEFINITION OF "MENTALLY DEFECTIVE."

As regards the definitions of defectives in 17 (2), one of the changes obviously desirable was to make them more readily applicable to children, in the original form the definition is ambiguous in this respect, being based on the capacity or not to earn a living.

Of the various amendments proposed to the definitions of "imbecile" and "feeble-minded," those standing in the name of the Home Secretary seem on the whole to be the most satisfactory. The definitions thus modified read as follows:

(b) Imbeciles; that is persons who are capable of guarding themselves against common physical dangers, but who by

reason of mental defect existing from birth or from an early age are incapable of earning their own living, or in the case of children incapable of being taught to earn their own living.

(c) Feeble-minded persons; that is to say persons who may be capable of earning or being taught to earn their own living under favourable circumstances, but are incapable through mental defect existing from birth or from an early age of managing themselves or their affairs except under suitable supervision or, in the case of children, of receiving benefit from the instruction in the ordinary public elementary schools.

It will be seen that this omits the phrases "competing on equal terms with their normal fellows" and "managing their affairs with ordinary prudence" which were certainly equivocal and calculated to raise a smile in the House of Commons. The form now suggested seems workable, not open to serious criticism, and as good a subdivision as the nature of the material to be classified permits.

All the amendments put down to these forms are open to criticism for one reason or another, and are only attempts to modify the form of words. The basis of the form now adopted is that recommended by the Royal College of Physicians to the Royal Commission.

MORAL IMBECILES.

In regard to moral imbeciles important amendments are proposed by Mr. Dickinson, making it necessary that the condition should be a permanent mental defect and that the vicious or criminal propensities should be habitual. This is important, as it is undesirable to certify a child as a moral imbecile who, as sometimes happens, is merely passing through a phase of this kind.

"MENTALLY INFIRM PERSONS."

Coming to "mentally infirm persons"—the last group of persons to be regarded as defectives within the meaning of the Act—there is a strong feeling that, however desirable it may be that some steps should be taken to relieve the asylums of the growing burden of these old people who could very well be cared for at less expense elsewhere, nevertheless, this class is both in its nature and in the nature of the treatment required, quite different from the other classes of defectives defined by the bill. It is a group of persons that can and ought to be dealt with under the Lunacy Acts in such a way as to meet the objections referred to above. Moreover, many members of this class are adequately provided for under the Poor Law, and it seems an unfortunate proposal to introduce this group into a measure which in its origin and its actual provisions is designed for a totally different set of persons.

The definition itself is much open to criticism. Mental infirmity cannot be said to arise from the decay of the faculties; this is simply another way of expressing the same fact.

If this subclause is added to the bill, there is little doubt that there will be a widespread tendency to discharge mentally infirm persons from asylums and flood the new institutions that are to be established under the Act, or use up money for purposes quite alien to the main purposes of the measure.

NOTIFICATION OF CASES.

Clause 18 deals with notification. In its present form it includes all defectives. The duty is imposed upon overseers, relieving officers, district medical officers, medical officers of health, and constables. An amendment is now proposed to add any registered medical practitioner who has seen or examined any person whom he has reason to believe is defective. This appears to be an intrusion into the privacy of the home life and a further invasion of professional secrecy, which is hardly called for in the interests of the public or the individual.

If there is to be any notification at all it should certainly be limited to those who are deemed subject to be dealt with under the Act, and the private medical practitioner should not be called upon to report cases coming to his knowledge in the course of his practice. Nothing would be more calculated to cause parents to refrain from seeking medical advice in regard to children who are backward or who might be supposed to be defective.

The other provisions of the Act will give all the statistical and other information as to individuals that can reasonably be required.

VOLUNTARY BOARDERS.

There remains one other important problem awaiting solution, and that is how and how far provision should be made for allowing persons to become voluntary inmates of houses or institutions under the Act.

There is a strong feeling in favour of something being done in this direction on the part of members of the Standing Committee, based doubtless on the desire to mitigate in some degree the compulsory aspect of the bill. There is also the precedent of similar provision in the Lunacy Acts.

It is certainly very desirable that the voluntary principle should obtain recognition, as otherwise there will be reluctance on the part of large sections of the public to take advantage of the care and management available for defectives, if certification is to be necessary in every case. On the other hand, it is necessary that such limits should be imposed on the employment of this method as not to reduce it to an absurdity, or to defeat the principle of compulsion aimed at in regard to those who have become subject to be dealt with under the Act by reason of having come in contact with the ordinary law in one of the ways specified. Thus it would be unreasonable to extend this liberty of judgement to idiots, imbeciles, moral imbeciles, or senile demented.

This leaves the feeble-minded only to come within the purview of such a clause, and of these it should only be applicable in the case of those who are not subject to be dealt with under the Act.

This will readily be conceded when it is considered that the voluntary status must be accompanied by the right of the individual to discharge himself. The extension of this right to those who have become subject to the Act would tend to defeat its object.

A convenient extension of the principle might be made in regard to all defectives under the age of 21 in regard to whom parents or guardians might be empowered to place them in homes without certification, but subject to notification to the Commissioners, which would be required in the case of all voluntary boarders.

If such a clause were inserted and if the new clauses, already foreshadowed, provide for idiots, imbeciles, and moral imbeciles of all ages more or less on the lines of the present Idiots Act, then Clause 25 might be limited to feeble-minded defectives under 21 who are subject to be dealt with under the Act, but in whose case it is not desired to apply the full judicial procedure by order—that is, to allow them to be received on a simple medical certificate as outlined in the clause.

Every class of case will thus be provided for in such a way as to cause the least possible offence, and yet without avoiding official supervision and without interfering unduly with the liberty of the individual.

Proposals somewhat on these lines have been made, but they seem to require considerable amendment to free them from objection.

Another proposal has been put forward for the provision of receiving houses or wards. This idea is borrowed from the corresponding plan in regard to lunacy work, in which it has received the strong approval of the medical profession. It was embodied in the proposals of the Royal Commission, which included lunatics in its scope. It is very doubtful, however, whether it is needed or applicable to the very different type of case contemplated by this bill, and it would seem likely to introduce unnecessary complications and expense.

On the whole the Government must be congratulated on the energy with which it is pushing forward the measure, and on the great improvements it has embodied in it. These have tended to consolidate instructed opinion in the House, and to render more easy its passage into law.

A NATIONAL association for the stamping out of epidemic poliomyelitis has been founded at Stockholm.

WE learn from the *London University Gazette* that the second edition of the *Guide to the Libraries of London*, by Reginald A. Rye, Goldsmiths' Librarian, has been published. It has been very considerably enlarged, and is illustrated by sixteen photographic plates. A table of the hours during which the libraries are open has been added. Copies may be obtained at 2s. 6d. net, or 2s. 10d. post free, on application at the university, or they may be ordered through Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton and other booksellers.

THE MOTOR SHOW.

CARS FOR MEDICAL MEN.

By H. MASSAC BUIST.

THE Motor Show, which opened at Olympia, Kensington, a week ago, has evidently evoked wider interest than any previous one of the series, which now totals eleven. The outstanding novelties and general tendencies of motor-car construction revealed at the show were dealt with in an article published in the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* last week, and as the exhibition closes to-night it remains to deal in more particular detail with the new points embodied in a few typical cars suitable for the service of the medical man. It may be noted, as a general observation, that wellnigh all types can be obtained in what are called Colonial models—as instance the 15-h.p. Napier—which nowadays consist chiefly in having stronger axles, steering connexions and springs, lower gear ratios to accommodate larger wheels and high ground clearance. The matter of coachwork for cars for medical men overseas has not yet progressed to any great extent—that is to say, the general practice remains to paint and varnish the body in the ordinary way, and we note that in the majority of our overseas possessions paint and varnish do not stand the rigours and rapid changes of the climate. The only thing that will come out successful under that heading is the metal sheet, steel type of body painted and stove-enamelled, bicycle fashion. That we have in several American types, and it is plain from the enterprise of the Birmingham Small Arms Company, for example, that we shall not be lacking it as a more or less general British practice in the course of a very few years.

NOVEL MIDDLE-POWERED SINGLE SLEEVE ARGYLL.

The Argyll single sleeve valve engine, with elliptical movement, was one of the novelties of last year's show, when, it will be remembered, some doubt seemed to exist as to the validity of the patents under which it was made. Not only has that since been absolutely settled, with the result that Argylls have emerged triumphantly from the Law Courts, but also in the hands of the public the system has been proved practical. It was, however, available only in a large nominal 25 h.p. machine, whereas this year the Argyll Company, while still retaining its 12-h.p. poppet-valve engine car, brings forward a four-guinea-tax 80-mm. cylinder bore by 130-mm. piston travel single sleeve valve engine in which it has been possible to do away with the junk ring on the head, thereby reducing friction and achieving a considerable gain of simplicity, for hitherto it had been deemed essential to equip sleeve valve engines with this device. The new chassis is, therefore, a middle-powered machine, though, like most of the 12-16 Treasury rating cars, it may be confidently looked to to give double its nominal rating at maximum—that is to say, 30-h.p.—so that here is a machine that will accommodate strongly-built coachwork. The live axle-drive is of the overhead worm system; another feature is the diagonal mode that enables all brakes to act at once, whether controlled by hand or foot, according as may be convenient to the driver at the given moment.

WORM-DRIVEN ARMSTRONG-WHITWORTH TYPES.

The cutting down of the maximum space allotted to any one stand has been the prime cause in preventing the Armstrong-Whitworth firm showing separate chassis this year, all the cars being mounted with bodies of various types. There are altogether four models, the largest being a 30-50-h.p. six-cylinder vehicle that is supplied with bevel or worm drive at option, whereas the other three four-cylinder models are all equipped with the worm drive. One of these is a four-guinea-tax 80 mm. by 135 mm. piston travel vehicle of 15-20 nominal rating, while another type has a bore measurement 5 mm. larger, and a fourth model has engine measurements of 100 by 120 mm. Thus all purses are catered for. In the general design little change has been made, but there are some interesting details about the complete vehicle, as instance the manner in which the bonnet of the six-cylinder chassis merges into the special type of scuttle dash forming an integral part with the unbroken limousine-landaulette body line, while the latest fashion is followed in providing windows