

## SCOTTISH DIVISION.

The Autumn Meeting of the Scottish Division was held in the Laboratory of the Scottish Asylums, 12, Bristo Place, Edinburgh, on Thursday, November 16th, 1899.

Dr. Beveridge Spence, President of the Association, was in the chair, and the other members present were: Drs. Bruce, Campbell Clark, Clouston, Easterbrook, Ireland, Keay, Law, Mitchell, Oswald, Parker, Ford Robertson, G. M. Robertson, Rorie, J. Rutherford, sen., J. Rutherford, jun., Urquhart, Yellowlees, and Turnbull (Secretary).

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

## NURSING IN IRISH WORKHOUSES.

The PRESIDENT, after expressing the pleasure he had in being present at the meeting of the Scottish Division, submitted the remit from the Annual Meeting in regard to qualified nursing for insane patients in union workhouses, and explained the circumstances which had led to it. In connection therewith, Dr. YELLOWLEES proposed, and Dr. CLOUSTON seconded, the following motion:—"That this branch deems it very desirable that the Association should represent to the Local Government Board that in an union workhouse in which insane patients are detained a nurse properly qualified and trained in mental nursing should be employed; and reports to the Council accordingly." Considerable discussion followed, a difference of opinion being shown as to how the amount of necessary qualification should be defined; but ultimately the motion was unanimously adopted as expressing the principle that trained nursing is required. Dr. KEAY then moved, and Dr. G. M. ROBERTSON seconded, that the minimum of training and qualification should be the holding of the certificate of the Medico-Psychological Association by the nurses; but on a vote being taken the motion was negatived by ten to five.

## POSITION OF NURSES IN SCOTLAND.

Dr. URQUHART submitted a motion for the appointment of a Divisional Committee to consider the position of the nursing staffs in Scottish asylums in regard to administrative questions. This was seconded by Dr. RORIE. An amendment that the Committee be not appointed unless its objects are specifically defined was brought forward by Dr. G. M. ROBERTSON and seconded by Dr. KEAY, and after discussion was negatived by eight votes to four. The original motion was afterwards put, and carried by seven votes to six; and the following were appointed members of the Committee:—Drs. Campbell Clark, Oswald, Turnbull, and Urquhart, with power to add to their number.

## THE PLATINUM METHOD.

Dr. FORD ROBERTSON gave a microscopic demonstration upon "New Facts regarding the Structure of the Central Nervous System revealed by the Platinum Method." In making a few remarks in explanation of the points illustrated by the microscopic specimens, he referred to a paper that he had already published upon the platinum method in the *Scottish Medical and Surgical Journal* of January last. Since that time he had studied a large number of additional preparations, and had obtained some further light upon the nature of the structural features that were revealed. For the benefit of those present who might not have seen his paper he stated that the method consisted essentially in placing blocks of formalin-hardened tissues for from two to six months in a mixture of platinum bichloride (PtCl<sub>4</sub>) and formalin. A gradual reduction of the platinum salt took place, and platinum black was deposited in the tissues, not diffusely, but, in the first instance at least, within certain tissue elements. The structural features thus brought out were especially those of the adventitia of the vessels, nerve-cells, and certain cell elements which had hitherto been regarded as belonging to the neuroglia. The connective-tissue fibres of the adventitia of the intra-cerebral vessels were very clearly shown, and were proved to be continued upon the capillaries, which, therefore, had a second coat. This fact had previously been inferred by Bevan Lewis

and others, chiefly from the presence of cellular elements which evidently did not belong to the intima. The fibres were of a highly elastic character. The method further brought out a new fact, namely, that many of these elastic fibres were continued from one vessel to another. Such connecting fibres were exceedingly numerous, especially between the neighbouring capillaries, and evidently served to support the vessels and to help to fix them in position. He was satisfied that the very minute capillaries described by Kronthal and Lapinsky had no existence, and that what these observers had taken to be such were merely those fibres which passed from one capillary to another. Coming next to the nerve-cells, he stated that the method was capable of bringing out the acidophile reticulum and granules of the nucleus, and to a certain extent confirmed the description that had been given of this portion of the cell by Giuseppe Levi. In a few instances the primitive fibrils of the nerve-cell protoplasm had been revealed with remarkable distinctness, and he believed that the method, when further experience of it had taught how its action could be better controlled, would render it possible to trace the exact course of these fibrils in different categories of nerve-cells. The special cell elements to which reference had been made were of great interest. They were most commonly seen as cells with a large nucleus, a small amount of perinuclear protoplasm, and from three to eight delicate, almost thread-like branches, which divided dichotomously, and might extend to a distance equal to about ten times the diameter of the cell body. Some of them, however, were quite devoid of branches, and intermediate forms were also to be observed. These cells occurred throughout the central nervous system. They were exceedingly numerous—from six to twelve often being visible in a single field of the ordinary high-power microscope. In reaction to this method, and morphologically, they were entirely different from the neuroglia cells as these were commonly described. He was of opinion that they were mesoblastic elements, while the true neuroglia cells were essentially epiblastic in origin. He did not wish to discuss the question of the single or double origin of the neuroglia, but he maintained that the evidence of the platinum method did not confirm the views of those who believed that this tissue was developed both from the epiblast and from the mesoblast. It proved that there were really two entirely distinct tissues, which were as different from each other as a leucocyte from a pyramidal nerve-cell. The evidence of the mesoblastic origin of these special cell elements was so strong that he thought he might venture to suggest that they should be termed "mesoglia cells," in contradistinction to "neuroglia cells," the epiblastic origin of which was sufficiently recognised in the "neuro." He stated that there were many other interesting structural features revealed by the method, but he would not deal with them at present.

The PRESIDENT said that Dr. Ford Robertson had demonstrated the very great advantage of having a laboratory such as that they were holding the meeting in that afternoon. The Scottish Division had set a great example to other countries in their work, and he was sure that the success of this laboratory would be great and brilliant. A very important laboratory had been established in connection with the London County Council asylums, and in the Midlands they were trying to induce the committees of asylums to do likewise. He thought that if they could show them the good work done in Edinburgh they would soon get the money. Dr. Miller, of Warwick, had been working very hard on this question, and they had now got so far that they were about to ask for a certain allowance for the purpose of establishing a laboratory in Birmingham or some other central place. He knew that there was a slight opposition to the proposal, but he thought that they were quite able to overcome that opposition, and that they would be able to show much good work, and not the waste of material now taking place in the asylums of the Midland counties.

Dr. CLOUSTON asked if these peculiar cells were specially abundant in any particular situations, and if Dr. Robertson could make any suggestion as to their function.

Dr. FORD ROBERTSON, in reply, said that the cells appeared to be most abundant in the cerebral cortex, or wherever there were nerve-cells. He could not say definitely what their function was, but it seemed to him that these cells to a certain extent corresponded to the endothelial cells of fibrous tissues, and that their function was probably similar, although it was in some way specialised. They certainly could not form fibroblasts, as endothelial cells or connective-tissue corpuscles were

capable of doing. He had obtained satisfactory evidence that the granular corpuscles that were to be observed in the neighbourhood of areas of softening in the central nervous system were derived from these mesoglia cells.

Dr. CLOUSTON said that he was sure they agreed with him in congratulating Dr. Ford Robertson on this brilliant discovery, and that he would trace out the pathology of those cells as he had shown them their histology.

Dr. EASTERBROOK read a paper on "An Attack of Epilepsy (*Status Epilepticus*) followed within six weeks by an Attack of Chorea, occurring in a patient suffering from Acute Puerperal Insanity" (see page 114).

Dr. URQUHART showed, and made observations upon, a number of forms for case-taking, etc., which had been prepared by Dr. Toulouse for use in the Villejuif Asylum.

Dr. YELLOWLEES moved a vote of thanks to Dr. Spence for his conduct in the chair, and conveyed to him the great gratification and honour which the Division felt in having the President with them on that occasion.

---

#### PARLIAMENTARY NEWS.

##### STATE INEBRIATE REFORMATORIES.—October 23rd, 1899.

Mr. PICKERSGILL asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his attention had been called to the observations of the learned Chairman of the County of London Sessions on the 18th inst., in passing sentence on Joanna Driscoll, that there was no State inebriate reformatory in existence to which he could order her to be sent, as contemplated by the Inebriates Act; whether, seeing that a man who had previously been convicted seven times in twelve months was sentenced at the recent Lancaster Quarter Sessions to three years' detention in an inebriates' reformatory, but the Home Office had informed the Governor of Lancaster Castle that there was no reformatory for such inebriates, he would state what course did he propose to take with regard to this prisoner, and whether temporary arrangements had been made for the use of a portion of one of Her Majesty's prisons for a State inebriate reformatory as stated in the report of the Departmental Committee, dated 12th December last, and if not, would he be good enough to state what steps he had taken to give effect to the intention of Parliament?

Sir M. WHITE RIDLEY.—I have seen a newspaper report of the case at the London Quarter Sessions, and I am making inquiry as to the circumstances. I may say that *prima facie* the accused seems to be as well qualified for committal to a certified reformatory—of which there are now several in existence—as to a State reformatory. As regards the case at the Lancaster Quarter Sessions, I am also making inquiry, as the circumstances of the committal are not clear. I may add that there will be at least one certified reformatory ready for the reception of male inebriates in a very short time. I have abandoned the project of adapting a portion of one of Her Majesty's prisons for use as a temporary State reformatory. My reasons for so doing, as well as for hesitating to establish a permanent State reformatory, are given fully in a circular which I issued last January to Her Majesty's judges, and of which I have directed a copy to be sent to the hon. member. I will say here that subsequent experience has justified and confirmed that hesitation.

---

#### 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. White.*

Frederick White, police constable, was indicted for shop-breaking. He was seen on more than one occasion to ransack shops at night, and when his house was