

abortion known as a mooncalf. Starblasting, but not moonblasting, occurs in Shakespeare (*Lear*, iii, 4). The third meaning of mooncalf (a dolt or stupid fellow) is easily understood, cf. lunatic, lunacy.

THE INEBRIATES ACT, 1898.

ACTION OF THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.

As there has been a good deal of ill-informed criticism in reference to delay on the part of local authorities to put in force the powers conferred by the Inebriates Act of 1898, it is satisfactory to learn, from a report presented this week to the London County Council, that vigorous action is being taken by the Committee to which this question has been referred. The Committee in their report say:

At the present time there are only three reformatories under the Act in the kingdom, namely, the Royal Victoria Homes, Brentry; the Duxhurst Reformatory, for Protestant women; and the St. Joseph's Reformatory, Ashford, for Roman Catholic women. We have, as already reported, been in negotiation with the managers of the Royal Victoria Homes, but have failed to come to any arrangement. The managers have declined to enter into any agreement unless the Council would pay a contribution towards capital expenditure in addition to contributions towards the maintenance of the inmates, and..... any temporary arrangement with the managers of the homes is impracticable owing to the managers declining to enter into an agreement for a term of less than five years. With the managers of the Duxhurst and St. Joseph's Reformatories the Council has, it will be remembered, on our recommendation, entered into agreements for the reception of female inebriates. There are now 19 London inmates at the Duxhurst Reformatory, which is the full number for which there is accommodation. At the date of the latest return there were 36 London inmates at the St. Joseph's Reformatory, and there was still accommodation available for about 20 more.

Having regard to the insufficiency of accommodation for Protestant women at the Duxhurst Reformatory, and the refusal of the managers to receive patients of the prostitute class, who form a large proportion of those who come before the courts, we have been in negotiation with the Salvation Army, with the managers of various penitentiaries, who, we understood, had under consideration the question of applying for certificates under the Act, and have done all we could to find accommodation for those who could not be received under the terms of our existing agreements. Our efforts have not, however, been successful, and failing the provision of accommodation in any other way, the Council, on our recommendation, decided to provide accommodation itself, and has, for this purpose, acquired the Farmfield Estate, and arrangements are now being pushed forward as rapidly as possible for the adaptation of the buildings on the estate for the purpose of a reformatory for females. In order that no avoidable delay may occur in bringing the buildings into use immediately they are ready, a superintendent has already been appointed, and we are in conference with her with a view to the completion of the arrangements with regard to the staff and other details. We hope to have the reformatory ready for the reception of patients not later than the middle of June.

With regard to the accommodation for male inebriates we have been in negotiation with the Church Army, who have a reformatory in course of construction near Dorking, and with the Managers of the Lingfield Training Colony, which has been visited by our Chairman. The Managers of the Colony are prepared to make arrangements in the existing buildings at the Colony for the temporary accommodation of from ten to fourteen inmates within a few weeks, and to proceed with the erection of a permanent reformatory at which they propose to provide accommodation for twenty-five inmates. This accommodation they are prepared to make available for the reception of London inmates on the terms stated in our recommendation, which is as follows:

"That an agreement be entered into with the managers of the Lingfield Training Colony for the reception of male inebriates from the County of London at the Colony in one of the existing buildings to be adapted for the purpose pending the erection of a permanent reformatory at the Colony, and subsequently at such reformatory, the Council to pay a rate of 1s. per day per head towards the maintenance of each such patient received and maintained at the Colony. The agreement to be for a term of not less than four years, and to be subject to the condition that the Council will arrange that when there are vacancies for the reception of reformatory patients at the Lingfield Colony, no male inebriate committed from within the County of London towards whose maintenance the Council is liable to contribute shall be sent to any other than the Lingfield Reformatory during the four years for which the agreement is to last, and while the arrangements for the care and maintenance are carried out to the Council's satisfaction, the four years for which the agreement is to last to commence from the date at which the temporary accommodation is available, and that it be referred to the solicitor to complete the agreement."

This report, subject to a slight amendment securing to the Council the power of sending male inebriates to its own reformatory at Horley, was carried *nemine contradicente*.

THE PLAGUE.

PREVALENCE OF THE DISEASE.

INDIA.

IN the City of Bombay on March 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th, there occurred 134, 152, 146, 138, 108, and 133 cases of plague respectively, and 90, 85, 108, 98, 100, and 105 deaths from the disease. Practically about 100 deaths a day were occurring during the first week in March, and the latest telegrams afford no signs of abatement. On March 2nd, three ser-

vants in the compound of Government House, Malabar Point, were reported to be suffering from plague. Throughout the Bombay Presidency plague continues at most of the old centres, and it has appeared at several places previously exempt.

Plague is spreading far and wide in the Bengal Presidency, and as many as 4,725 deaths occurred from the disease during the week ending March 21st. In Calcutta 744 deaths from plague are recorded, being actually in excess of the Bombay fatalities. In the Patna District as many as 2,044 deaths occurred during the week ending March 21st. Lord Curzon is doing all that he can to encourage the natives to be inoculated; but although a few come forward, it is mostly with the idea of obtaining relief from the inconveniences of the plague measures.

From the Mysore Province there is better news. At the beginning of March the affected districts in the Province fell in number from 41 to 26, and the actual cases in those still affected were much fewer. The southern parts of the peninsula experience the returning heat of spring at an earlier date than those farther north, and it is just possible that this accounts for the difference between the northern and southern reports.

MAURITIUS.

During the week ending March 22nd, 8 fresh cases of plague occurred in the island and 5 deaths from the disease.

UNITED STATES.

Since the sporadic case of plague, which occurred in the Chinese quarter of San Francisco on March 6th, no other has been notified. It is said that the authorities have inspected and disinfected the Chinese quarter of the city. Except by evacuation and by destruction of the Chinese quarter of San Francisco by fire, it is scarcely conceivable that this pest house could have been disinfected.

MIDWIVES BILL

THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF IRELAND.

WE understand that the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland is taking steps to have the Midwives Bill opposed at its third reading, unless the scope of the Bill is extended to Ireland. There are a great number of women trained as midwives in the lying-in hospitals of Ireland—particularly in the Rotunda and Coombe—and the College considers that it is unfair that these women should have to proceed to England for examination by the Central Board when the extension of the Bill to Ireland would give that country a representation on the Central Board, and would provide for an Irish examination centre.

On the other hand, it is pointed out that the College has itself ceased to grant a certificate to midwives and nurses, and as the certificates of the existing midwives would be recognised by the proposed Central Board, the interests of the College are not directly affected.

The following letter has been addressed to Irish members of Parliament and to the members of the Grand Committee on Law:

Royal College of Physicians, Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin.

March, 1900.

Dear Sir,—I am directed by the President and Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland to call your attention to the serious injury which will be inflicted upon Irish-trained midwives and upon Irish training institutions should the Midwives Bill now before Parliament be enacted in its present form.

One hundred and fifty years ago the Rotunda Lying-in Hospital, Dublin, was granted a Royal Charter with the express object of training, examining, and certifying midwives, and since then Dublin has been regarded as the most important school of midwifery in the United Kingdom, and consequently attracts a large number of English women annually to its training schools. The College considers that it will be an injustice to women trained and examined at considerable expense in this country if they should be compelled to present themselves for re-examination before a Central Board in England should they determine to practise in that country. For these reasons the President and Fellows are of opinion that the Midwives Bill should be extended to Ireland.—Yours faithfully,

JAMES CRAIG, M.D.,

Fellow and Registrar.

PROPOSED MEETING IN LONDON.

WE are asked to state that a meeting of medical and lay constituents of the boroughs and divisions of South-east London and adjacent parts of Kent and Surrey will be held to consider measures to resist the registration of midwives, and particularly the Bill now before Parliament, at the Cannon Street Hotel, London, E.C., on Wednesday next at 4 P.M. The chair will be taken by Mr. George Brown, Direct Representative for England on the General Medical Council, and the members of Parliament for the boroughs and divisions comprised have been invited to attend. It is proposed to move the following resolutions:

(1). That this meeting of medical constituents of the boroughs and divisions of South-east London and adjacent parts of Kent and Surrey condemn the registration of midwives and especially the Bill now before Parliament for that purpose as a retrogressive measure, a reversal of the humane and enlightened policy of the Medical Acts, in violation of the