

address on William Gilbert, describes him as the father of electrical science, and points out that before Gilbert there was no electrician.

Gilbert was successful in his practice, and was appointed physician to Queen Elizabeth, and afterwards to James I. In the town hall at Colchester is a painting, by Mr. Acland Hunt, representing Gilbert demonstrating his electrical and magnetic experiments to Queen Elizabeth and her Court. On the facade of the town hall is a statue of him, and in the public library a copy of his portrait. Gilbert's remains rest in Holy Trinity Church, Colchester, where a mural tablet tells briefly his life record. His monument, as Professor S. Thompson remarks, is his book in which he laid the foundation of terrestrial magnetism and of the experimental science of electricity. For this the world will always honour him, and medical men will be glad he was a physician.

R. T. WILLIAMSON.

Ireland

Vital Statistics for the Irish Free State

During the first quarter of the present year 14,301 births were registered in the Irish Free State. This number represents a birth rate of 19.4 per 1,000 of the estimated population, being 0.6 below the average rate for the first quarters of the ten years 1921-30. The equivalent figure for Northern Ireland was 20.6, and for England and Wales 16.3. Deaths registered during the quarter numbered 13,680, or a rate of 18.5 per 1,000. This rate is 1.3 above the rate for the first quarter of the previous year, and 1.1 above the average rate for the first quarters of the preceding decennium. Of the deaths registered, 1,271, or 9.3 per cent., were those of infants under 1 year, the number of deaths of infants being equivalent to 89 per 1,000 births, compared with 67, 52, and 71 for the three previous quarters respectively. The mortality in the Irish Free State from the principal epidemic diseases was higher than that for the first quarter of the preceding year, representing an annual rate of 0.7 per 1,000, compared with an average rate of 0.6 for the first quarters of the five years 1926-30. This higher death rate is attributed mainly to an increase in the mortality from measles, diarrhoea, and enteritis (of children under 2 years), and in a lesser degree to an increase in deaths from scarlet fever. Deaths from all forms of tuberculosis numbered 1,048, or an annual rate of 1.4 per 1,000; while the number of deaths ascribed to accidents and diseases of pregnancy and childbirth was 59, or a rate of 4.1 per 1,000 births registered.

Treatment of the Insane in Ireland

An attractive and detailed account of *The History of the Care of the Insane in Ireland up to the end of the Nineteenth Century* has now been published by Dr. T. Percy C. Kirkpatrick, registrar of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. The author opens with a brief account of the ancient views held about madness in Druidic times, and recalls that, during the codification of the ancient laws of Ireland about the time of St. Patrick, very definite regulations were defined for the protection of persons of unsound mind, provision being also made for their children. Later, monastic hospitals undertook the care of such patients, but after one or two abortive attempts at providing special institutions for them, the practice of confining dangerous lunatics in prisons continued until well on into the nineteenth century, though cells were provided at certain work-houses for them. St. Patrick's Hospital in Dublin was opened in 1757, and although very inadequate as regards

accommodation, it had to suffice for the entire country for many years. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was still the only public hospital exclusively devoted to the care of the insane, but a private asylum had been opened near Cork in 1799, and many insane persons were being maintained in the "Houses of Industry" of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, and Waterford. The Cork institution—which had been established in 1787—developed subsequently into one of the largest lunatic asylums in Ireland. The early years of the nineteenth century saw the birth of active interest in the treatment and classification of the insane, thanks mainly to Dr. Alexander Jackson, who concerned himself actively with the foundation of the Richmond Asylum in Dublin, and the private asylum at Farnham House. During the next forty years a great advance was made in the care of the insane, and various asylums came into existence in different parts of the country. This booklet, which is printed at the Dublin University Press by Ponsonby and Gibbs, represents a useful contribution to the history of what is now recognized as a definite branch of medicine.

Mayo Mental Hospital

In the annual report of the Mayo Mental Hospital for 1930 the resident medical superintendent, Dr. Sheridan, states that during the year 133 patients were admitted, 76 were discharged, and 73 died, the daily average number resident being 812. The most prevalent form of mental disorder was melancholia (recent), of which there were 33 cases, followed by dementia praecox (25). Other forms were: mania, 13; delusional (non-systematized), 9; recurrent mania and melancholia, mental deficiency, and senile dementia. Heredity was the cause or a factor in 29 cases, mental stress in 2, critical periods in 24, mental deficiency in 12, and alcohol in 6 cases. Other causes were bodily diseases—nervous, gastro-intestinal, and pulmonary. The number of discharged patients was below the average, the percentage of recovery on the number of admissions being 44.3. This was due chiefly to the unfavourable and relapsing type of cases under care; also to the fact that many of the acquired forms of mental disease supervened on a condition of mental deficiency in some degree. Deaths numbered 73, or 8.6 per cent. of the daily average number. All deaths were due to natural causes. Phthisis and other forms of tuberculous diseases accounted for 29, respiratory and cardiac diseases for 13, atrophy and senile decay for 12. Other causes were malignant disease, exhaustion from mania or melancholia, and organic brain disease. Of the patients who died, 29 were about 70 years of age.

Scotland

New Edinburgh Chair

Through a grant from the trust fund of the late Mr. Edward Clark, printer, Edinburgh, a chair of child life and health, known as the Edward Clark Chair, was recently founded in the University of Edinburgh. The University Court has now appointed Charles McNeil, M.D., F.R.C.P.Ed., to be the first occupant of this chair. Professor McNeil was born at Stranraer, and was educated at George Watson's College, Edinburgh. He took the M.A. degree at Edinburgh in 1901; and graduated M.B., Ch.B. with first-class honours in 1905. After acting as resident physician to the late Sir Thomas Fraser in the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, he became resident for a time in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital for Sick Children, and house-physician to the East London Hospital for Children at Shadwell. In 1910 he became a member of the Royal College of Physicians, and Fellow in 1913. At present he is physician to the Royal Edinburgh Hospital for Sick