

Homes in suitable cases. Inasmuch as there can be no doubt that drunkenness is in many cases a moral disease, and frequently hereditary in its nature, it clearly follows that it should be treated by moral and medicinal measures rather than, as hitherto, as a crime and by legal proceedings and punishments.

BERI-BERI.

We recently alluded, in this column, to the nature of this disease, referring especially to the outbreak in Dublin. The report which has been recently made by Dr. Norman is very important. The outbreak commenced in August, 1896, and slowly increased during the autumn and early winter, appearing to obtain its maximum about the beginning of December, after which time it steadily decreased. In the beginning of June, 1897, there were four male and six female patients still suffering from the disease. During June, ten cases occurred amongst women, and in July, eighty-one cases occurred amongst the female patients and three amongst the Nurses, while thirty cases occurred amongst the male patients, making a total of 124 cases in the present epidemic. Although the most severe in numbers, the disease was of a very mild type, and there appeared no reason to fear that the mortality would be heavy. Dr. Norman advised that the patients should be removed to some outside locality, preferably, a high situation with a dry soil; that a considerable section of the Asylum should be cleared of its occupants, and then be disinfected in the most thorough manner possible. He considered that, if after this procedure the disease should reappear, it would become a serious question whether the Asylum itself ought not to be entirely abandoned, because the disease is well known to attach itself to certain localities, and to haunt certain rooms and wards, proving that it spreads by contamination of the soil and buildings. The matter is one of great importance and the progress of the epidemic in Dublin will be watched with the greatest interest.

Legal Matters.

LA LOI ROUSSEL.

It is stated that the terrible disease of syphilis is greatly on the increase, both in Paris, and in the French provinces, amongst wet nurses. The disease is said to be conveyed to healthy women—and by them, in turn, to their own healthy children—by their nurslings, who not unfrequently inherit the disease. Our own opinion, which we have stated in a former issue, is that the practice of wet nursing should be abolished in entirety, but, so long as wet nurses exist, they should most assuredly have some redress against infection of this description, and parents who knowingly allow an infected child to be nursed by a respectable and healthy woman, without acquainting the woman with the risk she is running, should be liable for a severe legal penalty.

We are informed that there exists in Paris a law, called *la loi Roussel*, by which wet nurses are compelled to undergo a thorough medical inspection, before being allowed to act in this capacity, and such nurses are requested to call in medical men, and obtain certificates as to the healthiness of the infants they nurse, but this law is not extensively observed on account of the expense connected with carrying it out. Those women who hire themselves out as wet nurses belong almost exclusively to the poorer classes, and do so in order to help to support their families. It is therefore especially cruel that these poor women should return to their homes contaminated and diseased, and, moreover, become fresh centres for the spread of infection.

It is stated further that the midwives who attend the maternity cases, are frequently allowed to choose wet nurses for the infants under their care. The responsibility of the midwife under these circumstances is, therefore, great, and she also should be severely dealt with, if, knowingly, she engages a healthy woman to nurse an infant affected with syphilis. A society has been formed in Paris for the protection of wet nurses, and it is to be hoped that this may be the means of bringing offenders, both amongst parents and midwives, to justice.

Whilst speaking upon the subject of wet nurses, it may be interesting to state that amongst uncivilized races in Central Africa, it is not uncommon for women who have no children to act as foster mothers. They are able to secrete milk by taking some native drug, whose properties are known to them, and children have grown up, who have been fed during their infancy in no other manner.

This custom is even more repugnant, to Western notions, than that of the ordinary wet nurse. At the same time the African woman does not deprive her own offspring of its natural food for the sake of money-making, so that, of the two practices, the African one is probably the less reprehensible.

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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)