

TROY, N. Y.

Net Value of all Products,		£2,610,776
	£	£
Iron and Steel, ...	816,665	Shirts, ... 308,054
Foundry Products, ...	407,895	Furnishing Goods (Men's), 302,693

LAWRENCE, MASS.

Net Value of all Products,		£2,239,221
	£	£
Worsted Goods, ...	515,072	Dyeing and Finishing
Carriages and Waggon's,	428,942	Textiles, ... 319,912
Woollen Goods, ...	326,678	Mixed Textiles, ... 307,029

VII.—*Statistics of the County Infirmaries, Ireland.* By Hercules MacDonnell, M.D., Dundalk.

[Read Tuesday, 20th May, 1884.]

I VENTURE to bring the subject of the County Infirmaries of Ireland before your Society, from a desire to place on record the large amount of medical and surgical relief afforded to the poor in Ireland by these institutions, the comparatively low rate at which this relief is administered, as well as some other points of interest which are now for the first time brought before the public in a form as complete as at present.

The difficulty in getting together this information has been considerable, owing to the fact that each County Infirmary exists as a separate unit, controlled by its own board of governors, and answerable only to the Grand Jury of its own county. Though existing as a system of relief (and that the oldest in this country), they lack the cohesion and security which a central authority alone can give, and the absence of which has occasionally enabled local influences and prejudices to prove detrimental to almost their very existence.

It would be out of place in a Society such as this to enter into the details of administration of these institutions, but a brief outline of their origin is absolutely necessary.

The Infirmaries were originally established by Act of the Irish Parliament, 5 Geo. III. cap. 20, in 1765, for the purpose of affording medical and surgical relief to the poor in Ireland. The power of taxation for their support was limited to a grant from the Consolidated Fund of £100 per annum for each. By the 45th of Geo. III. cap. 3, power of increasing the taxation by Grand Jury presentment was given, but that power was limited to £500 per annum. By the 6 & 7 of Wm. IV. cap. 116, these powers to Grand Juries of granting funds were extended to a maximum of £1,400 a-year, and £100 for the surgeon.

Provision was made for the maintenance of more than one infirmary in counties deemed large enough for two institutions; owing, however, to the fact of workhouses with hospitals attached to them

being subsequently established, it was not found necessary to act on this proviso.

The cases admitted into these county institutions are in all essentials of the same class as those treated in our metropolitan hospitals. Their means of support are derived from three sources—viz, presentments levied as county cess, subscriptions to qualify as annual or life governors, and bequests or donations.

Roughly speaking, about 70 per cent. of the gross incomes is derived from county presentments, the remaining 30 per cent. representing the annual subscriptions, and the interest on donations and bequests. In many cases this latter amount is held on trust, to be continued only so long as the institutions are supported on their existing basis, and in the majority of instances the buildings and land attached revert to the lord of the soil, should this present system be abolished.

I prepared a return for the year 1881, of the counties in Ireland, except Dublin, Cork, Limerick, and Galway, which are peculiarly circumstanced, and Waterford, which does not possess a County Infirmary. In that it appeared that the 27 county hospitals had 1,580 beds available and in use, giving an average to each of 58½; 12,953 patients were treated as interns, giving an average to each institution of 479. The gross expenditure amounted to £29,264 18s. 9d., or an average cost per patient of £2 5s. 4d., and per bed, £19 10s. 5¼d. In that year the county presentments amounted to £22,703 16s., and the total incomes to £33,169 17s 11d, which shows the private and extraneous income amounted to £10,666 1s. 11d., or more than one-third of the gross expenditure.

Taking the acreage of the 27 counties treated, and the Poor-law valuation, the gross expenditure for the county infirmaries, including salaries and charges, amounts to only ¼ of a penny per acre, and ⅞ of a penny per £. As I stated, the cost per patient amounted to £2 5s. 4d. On referring to the Appendix of the Annual Report of the Local Government Board for 1880 (page 227) it is seen that the cost of each pauper relieved in the workhouses during 1878, was £1 7s. 9d., exclusive of the considerable establishment charges, and of all salaries.

A similar return for 1882, omitting however statistics from the counties Derry, Longford, Meath, and Sligo (which were not forthcoming), shows that 23 infirmaries had 1,304 available beds, with the same average, 58 for each institution; 9,446 patients were treated as interns, giving an average of 410 to each. The gross expenditure amounted to £22,149 3s. 2d., or an average cost per patient of £2 10s. 8d., and per bed of £17 11s. 3¼d. The county presentments amounted to a sum of £18,263, and the gross income to £23,848 11s 1d., again showing the private aggregate contributions to amount to one-third of the county presentments. Taking the acreage and Poor-law valuation as before, we find the amount levied as presentment bears a ratio of ⅓ of a penny per acre, and exactly one half-penny per £ on the valuation. This amounts to 1s. 10d. for every 100 acres.

For last year the returns from the infirmaries, omitting Derry,

Longford, and Meath, which I have not yet received, show that 1,350 beds were used to maintain 10,025 intern patients, giving an average to each institution of 417. The gross expenditure was £24,610 8s. 4d., or an average cost per bed of £20 2s. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ d., and per patient of £2 11s. 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. The gross county presentments amounted to £19,106 16s., and the gross incomes to £25,767 6s. 7d., showing the private contributions, etc., to be £6,660 10s. 7d., or, as before, more than one-third of the county presentments. Taking the acreage and Poor-law valuation of the several counties, we find the levied presentment to bear a ratio of .32 of a penny per acre, and .52 of a penny per £.

From a perusal of these facts and figures it is seen that the actual cost to the cess-payer amounts to one halfpenny per £ of his valuation. For this amount he obtains the advantages of having an hospital replete with every surgical and medical appliance, and maintained in a state of efficiency which compares most favourably with our metropolitan hospitals. The rooted repugnance which exists to entering a workhouse hospital does not obtain here. No pauperising element enters into the question, nor is anyone disfranchised for accepting such relief.

In the years 1880, 1882, and 1883, the average presentments were £815, £794, and £796. On referring to the annual return for 1883, presented by the Board of Superintendence of Hospitals in Dublin receiving parliamentary grants, it is stated that 10,140 patients were treated at a total cost of £40,754, showing an average cost per bed of £53. Taking the three years mentioned above, we find the average cost per bed for the county infirmaries was £18 2s. 5d.; this it is only right to state is not quite accurate, as some of the institutions have not furnished a daily average return of beds occupied; but in as much as the infirmaries are with a few exceptions generally fully occupied, if, as an equivalent one-third be added, we arrive at a sum of £25, representing the annual cost per bed in the infirmaries, as against £53 per bed in the Dublin hospitals. It must further be borne in mind that only eleven institutions distribute the establishment charges in Dublin, whereas twenty-five infirmaries have to be maintained in separate counties.

The annual average cost per patient treated in the various public lunatic asylums in Ireland during the year 1882, was £22 16s. 5d., and one-fourth may be added to this sum to represent the annual average cost per bed, as about 25 per cent. are either annually discharged or die. This would bring the average cost per bed to £28. Comparing therefore the average costs of the county infirmaries, of the hospitals receiving parliamentary grants in Dublin, and of the lunatic asylums, we have conclusive proof of the economy practised in the infirmaries.
