

‘In erecting,’ he said, ‘new asylums, and providing further accommodation where it is required, regard should be had to the proportion of curable and chronic lunatics—I purposely avoid the use of the term incurable. Separate buildings, I propose, should be provided for chronic lunatics at a less cost, and parts of the workhouses, with the consent of the Poor Law Commissioners, may be adapted, in which case they are to be separated from the other part of the building, and to be deemed county asylums.’

It may be anticipated that these important clauses will afford the same relief to the overcrowded wards of the county asylums as the *Metropolitan Poor Act*, 1867, is about to do for the metropolitan asylums. No less than 3,000 chronic lunatics will be accommodated in the two asylums now building by the Metropolitan Board. In the counties many of the workhouses are fortunately half empty, and a little skill and arrangement would enable the guardians, under the provisions of this Act, to provide wards for the relief of the county asylums to the extent of about 25 per cent. of their inmates, and without any material sacrifice of the welfare of these patients, and with the manifest advantage of relieving the county asylums of the crowd of chronic and incurable lunatics that, year by year, now accumulate there.

Earth Closets.

The value of Mr. Moule’s invention in the application of the disinfecting power of dried earth to domestic uses can hardly be over-estimated. Let any one, who has an old-fashioned privy and cesspool in his garden, try the simple and inexpensive experiment of cleaning out and bricking up his cesspool, and of substituting two zinc pails—one under the seat for use and the other filled with earth dried in the sun, or better in an oven, till it has become a fine impalpable powder; and let him direct those, who may then use the privy, to sprinkle on each occasion, with a shovel, a little of the dried earth over the excreta, and he will find the nasty smelling privy converted by this simple expedient into a perfectly sweet and wholesome chamber. Every few days the pail may be emptied of its innocuous contents—rich in fertilising power—on to the nearest flower border. If it be desired to try the same experiment in the sick room, the portable earth closets sold by the patentees are most efficient and complete.

In public institutions, in prisons, workhouses, hospitals and asylums the system admits of the most ready application. Where water is scarce the earth closets are of special value. They have recently been adopted with great success at the criminal asylum at Broadmoor, and it is proposed to employ earth closets only at the new Catholic lunatic asylum shortly to be opened at Purchase Manor, near Haywards Heath.

Dr. Hawksley's recent pamphlet* is exhaustive of the question of the relations of organic matter to life in health and disease. He thus describes the method in which the earth closet may be used :—

The earth-closet, the invaluable and ingenious invention of the Rev. H. Moule, effects this object in the most simple and convenient way. On using the handle a shower of earth supplies the place of water; and the arrangements for the removal of the product may be made either by the adoption of a zinc-lined iron pail, or of a tank, or of a vault, into which all the earth-closets in a house might pour their products. Which of these modes shall be adopted is simply a question of expediency; my own belief is, that for a crowded town, where there is little convenience for the storage and drying of such materials, a frequent removal would be desirable.

Should anyone object to earth-closets for the poor, on the ground of their expense, or of any supposed difficulty in keeping them in order, let me say, that as to expense they are much less expensive than water-closets in the first instance; they are so simple in their construction that to get out of order must be a very rare and exceptional thing; and that, as to any supposed difficulty in using them, and making their use successful, it is again much less than with the water-closet. To obviate any question as to neglect in pulling the handle, and so failure in supplying the earth, *the closets are made self-acting*, so as to require no attention.

But again, if the matter of expense were more pressing, it is quite possible to employ the dry earth system without the earth-closet; and the method possesses some advantages. For this purpose the cheapest and readiest form would be the adoption of a zinc sheet iron tank, into which one or many closets would discharge their recepta. If more than one, there would be a common shaft through which the upper closets would communicate with the tank. With such an arrangement the earth closet would be unnecessary, and only an ordinary seat would be required.

* "Matter,—its Ministry to Life in Health and Disease; and Earth.—as the Natural Link between Organic and Inorganic Matter," by Thomas Hawksley, M.D. Lond., M.R.C.P., Physician to the Margaret Street Infirmary for Consumption and Chest Diseases. London: John Churchill and Sons, New Burlington Street. (Pamphlet.)

With regard to the agricultural value of the earth when once used in the earth-closet, Dr. Hawksley gives the following analysis, by Mr. Evans, analytical chemist, Leadenhall-street:—

Since writing the above, Mr. Evans has sent me the analysis of another specimen of the product on which the earth was once used only, taken from a vault and dried, the constitution of which he thus reports.—

Organic matter	22.00	per cent.
Soluble Phosphate of Lime	1.10	”
Alkaline Salts	4.10	”
Nitrogen	0.65	”
Potash	1.10	”
Alumina, Sand, &c.	70.75	”
	100.00	

And he estimates the above at 30s. per ton, with a note that the earth in this sample was in excess, and that ordinarily the value would be from 40s. to 60s. per ton. This second analysis considerably strengthens the argument for the value of the product.

A Derby Town Councillor on the Treatment of the Insane.

Philanthropists have often a hard time of it in defending the cause of progress against the local orators of town councils and boards of guardians. Indeed, they sometimes realise, with a weary sense of thankfulness, the promised Conservative reaction, when they regard the conduct of some of those whom accident has hitherto placed in municipal or vestry authority. To these sorrowful illustrations the Derby Town Council has furnished a prominent example. At their last quarterly meeting the subject of the proposed Borough Lunatic Asylum was discussed. Mr. Councillor Pool made the following remarks:—

Mr. Pool asked how it was there were more lunatics now than formerly. He was strongly inclined to think it was owing to the good treatment they received. It was his opinion that the best plan of treatment would be to treat them with a horsehip! He was not speaking ironically at all, but meant what he said; a good horsehip would be the best thing. Under the present system of treatment they were always likely to have a good many lunatics.