

patient never complaining of pain. For a day or two after the puncture the spots where the needle had been inserted were slightly inflamed, but this passed away without any bad result. The mental and physical condition of the patient gradually improved as the process went on, and soon all the principal hair follicles on her face had been destroyed. She was then sent to the country house at Pitlochrie for a change, where she improved so much that after having been tried at home for a month on pass, she was discharged recovered on the 18th October, 1888. Since that time she is reported to have remained well and there has been no return of the growth of hair.

It may be objected that there were various other elements in the recovery of this young lady, besides the removal of the hair; that perhaps time was one of the chief of these, but Dr. Savage, in reporting a somewhat similar case in the *Journal of July, 1886*, remarks that such cases are sufficiently interesting to suggest similar trials in the future.

OCCASIONAL NOTES OF THE QUARTER.

Fire at the Montreal Asylum.

Everyone who has read the description of the terrible fire at the St. Jean de Dieu Asylum, commonly called Longue Pointe, ten miles from Montreal, opened in 1875, cannot fail to have had his sympathies excited for the unfortunate inmates, and also, we hasten to add, admiration for the heroism displayed by some of the nuns to whose care the patients were entrusted. Those who are acquainted with the building, its height, and the number of men and women confined in the highest story, will have been able to picture to themselves the fearful scene which presented itself, the impossibility of escape, and the suffering which must have been endured. There were 1,300 lunatics in the asylum. How many perished is still unknown, and probably will never be accurately ascertained, as the books have been destroyed in the fire. The "*Toronto World*,"* of May 7th, when describing the calamity, observes "that ever since Quebec was a province its management of the insane has been a shame." But the present is not the occasion on which to dwell on the laches of this asylum. Let them

* We are indebted to this and other papers kindly sent us, for the information given in the remainder of this account.

perish in the fire which has consumed the building. The murmur of criticism should be silenced.

It is stated that the fire originated in a cupboard, having been kindled by a patient. This was in the second ward on the women's side in an upper story, and as the ventilation was carried on by a shaft connected with the towers, the flames soon appeared blazing up through the roof in the centre of each tower. As the heat increased, the statues fell from their niches to the ground, and then the inmates threw themselves on their knees and said that the saints had indeed deserted them. It is remarkable that not a male patient was lost. The victims were all women. From the upper wards, where the violent patients were secured, there came the wildest screams as they resisted the nuns beseeching them to make their escape. When the telegram announcing the fire and imploring assistance reached Montreal, the Mayor ordered the engines to the spot, but in five minutes the supply of water was exhausted—the St. Lawrence river was a mile distant. Then the firemen turned their attention to the inmates, and with their axes burst open the doors. It was such a sight as no fireman ever before witnessed. In one ward the patients, 25 in number, huddled together at the approach of the captain, like so many sheep, entwining their arms in one mass of humanity. He endeavoured to extricate them, but was obliged to leave them enfolded in a shroud of flame, and escape with his life. At some of the windows a maniac would be seen peering through the bars, grinning and jabbering at the bright flame that went up to the sky; as the heat became more intense, she would grasp them, and remain until the flames enveloped her. The scene must have been rendered still more horrible by the people, who came from all parts, attracted by the blaze, for in an hour there was one surging mass of vociferating Frenchmen, drinking whisky, and discussing the strange scene they beheld.

Although the character of this institution has, with too much reason, been severely criticized, it is an agreeable duty to be able to record the heroism of some of the nuns in charge, to which we have already referred. One of them, Sister Marie, was ill in the infirmary on the fifth floor, and to her rescue came three others, who seized their companion and bore her in a blanket to the staircase, but they were met by a sheet of flame, and all four perished. Others, by turns, implored, besought, and commanded the patients, and

succeeded in saving many. We are sorry to learn that the Lady Superior, Sister Therese, who had been seriously ill during the winter with pneumonia, and was slowly recovering, is suffering from shock and distress, which are not unlikely to prove fatal. Drs. Bourque and Baralet were carried from the building unconscious. The "Toronto World" observes "that whatever can be said of the management of the institution as a whole, the individuals exercised every power to lessen the calamity they neglected to avert."

This description of the fire at the Montreal Asylum would be incomplete without the following additional paragraphs. A loud explosion was followed by a crash of beams, the interior was giving way, and wild faces sank from the windows, and the shrieks were lost in the general uproar. One by one the walls toppled inward, and a fierce blaze burst up from the newly-added fuel, that rose to the dark skies and shot its glare over the St. Lawrence to the southern shore, and even tinged the crest of Mount Royal, ten miles distant. Then it died down to blackness, and nothing but a few broken-down towers remained in the midst of a seething mass of metal and *débris*, under which are now the ashes of the victims. By this time it was six o'clock, and growing dark, and very cold. The poor sisters, most of them young and delicate, stood ankle-deep in mud. The patients wandered about anxiously, clad in scant garments, many of them veritable Ophelias. When released many of them leaped for joy, and bounded like deer across the fields to the woods. A new dread has come upon the inhabitants from the presence of so many escaped lunatics, and they may count themselves fortunate if they are not visited by a series of alarms. This disaster has been foretold for many years. (There was an entire absence of fire-fighting facilities. Although the fire-appliances were there, they were utterly useless.) A long road was bethronged with carriages. The Mayor and Aldermen drove out in pairs, ladies, men in their dog-carts, and a few rode on horseback. It was a strange procession they met. The transport service of Montreal was pressed into the service, and vehicles of all kinds were returning, filled with vacant-eyed women, wearing blankets over their shoulders, and in front a pair of weeping nuns, clad in their black robes. Many were taken to the neighbouring convents of St. Isidore, St. Joseph de Bénoit, St. Laurent, and Point Aux Trembles.

We cannot allow this calamity to pass by without ex-

pressing, not only our sympathy with those who have suffered so severely, but the earnest hope that the Colonial Government will take this opportunity of altering the system by which the insane poor have been farmed out to a Religious Order. Whatever blame may be attached to the latter, it is impossible to avoid apportioning a certain amount of the evil which has been associated with this institution to the unwise course pursued by the Canadian Legislature.

Alleged Increase of Lunacy in Lincolnshire.

The question of a new asylum was brought forward at a quarterly meeting of the Visitors held May 15th, at Bracebridge, by Alderman Lieutenant-Colonel Conway Gordon. He proposed that in view of the steady increase of lunacy in the county and the crowded state of the asylum, negotiations be opened with the County Council, suggesting the desirability of building another asylum. He stated that in 1855 the total number of lunatics was 526; in 1860, 642; in 1865, 795; in 1870, 922; in 1875, 937; in 1880, 988; in 1885, 1,040; while on January 1, 1890, the pauper lunatics in Lincolnshire reached 1,123, which the speaker called an astounding figure. It would seem as if the correctness of this designation would be sensibly affected by the increase or otherwise of the population, and yet when Alderman Sharpe naturally asked, "Can you give us the proportion to population?" Colonel Gordon was unable to reply. Nor does it appear to have been thought important to ascertain whether this increase arose from a larger amount of occurring insanity at the present time, than in 1855. The answer to this question would also bear very decidedly upon the degree in which the numbers brought forward are "astounding." We admit, however, that the practical question is how to make provision for the increased number of lunatics from whatever cause such increase may arise; but there is nothing particularly alarming in having to provide additional accommodation as years roll on, if the population increase, and if the number of recoveries and deaths are fewer than the admissions. When the Bracebridge Asylum was built in 1855, there were 262 patients; in 1860, 391; in 1865, 481; in 1870, 595; in 1875, 606; in 1880, 658; in 1885, 704; and on January 1,