

we commence with a report, which, so far as we know, is not published, except in a local newspaper.

*Report of the Gloucester County Asylum.*

We observe in the report of the visitors of this asylum to the last Epiphany Sessions, the statement that, "the permission for patients to visit their friends out of the asylum for limited periods, has been extended by the superintendent of late, with apparently very good effects."

In the report of the Visiting Commissioners of Lunacy this novelty in asylum treatment is referred to in the following terms. "The practice of taking the patients beyond the premises for exercise and recreation has been continued and extended, and visits to their friends and relatives are still permitted and encouraged. On these occasions the patients are allowed to wear their own clothes; they also in many instances use them when attending Divine service in the chapel. All these indulgences have evidently a most beneficial effect on the inmates, producing a kindly feeling amongst them, and diminishing the sense of restraint which we find is often engendered by the opposite mode of treatment."

When we read this in the Gloucester newspaper, and felt that it was something new and good, we wrote to our old friend Dr. Williams, who had instituted the practice, to know more about it, and here is what he said in reply:—"Three years ago I commenced the practice of allowing my patients to go out with their friends, and I have gradually extended it up to the present time. In only two instances has the privilege been abused. Last year 400 visits were paid from the establishment, and one patient spent a week with his friends in Somersetshire. As a general rule, the expense is defrayed by the friends, although occasionally I charge it to the institution. I always insist that the person who takes the patient out, undertakes, in writing, to bring him back at a certain time. I also keep a book in which I record every visit, I enclose you one of the leaves."

It must be observed that this sending out of patients to visit their friends is altogether different to allowing patients to be absent on trial under the authority of the visitors, exercised according to the statute. It is, in fact, an exercise of the power of the physician in the treatment of his patient without legal warrant, but just similar to that by which he permits his patients, under proper selection and care, to walk beyond the bounds of the asylum. The letter of the law is, that a superintendent who wilfully permits a patient to escape, is guilty of a misdemeanor; but the spirit of the law is, that a patient is a patient, and not a prisoner, and that in the asylum he is placed under the care and treatment and authority of the superintendent as his physician. In this relation it is evident that any degree of liberty given by a superintendent to a patient with the

intention and purpose of conferring benefit and happiness upon the patient, would come within the scope of the physician's power, so long as he exercised it with sufficient caution and judgment to protect the interests of the public and of the patient; and we can conceive few things better adapted to break any prejudices of the poorer classes against asylums as places of detention, and thoroughly to reconcile inmates of asylums with their detention than this new plan of Dr. Williams. How often may not such a visit to friends be made the useful preliminary to the legal discharge, leading the mind of the patient, without needless shock, to view the struggles and trials of renewed liberty. How often may not the galling doubts of the affection of relatives be removed by such a visit; and above all, in how many cases will not such visits tend to remove from the mind of a patient the feeling that he is shut up against his will and against his interest, and lead him to recognise the benevolent wisdom which secludes him from the world? We have ourselves begun to follow Dr. Williams' excellent example, and we hope and expect to see much good result from it.

*The West Riding of York Asylum.*

The report contains a large and well-drawn bird's-eye view map of the now completed buildings. This map is the work of a patient, and is an example of what patients can perform under kind and judicious encouragement. The asylum, which is now one of the largest in the kingdom, is somewhat too near to the busy and bustling town of Wakefield, and has a much too limited quantity of land, namely, 64 acres for 1150 patients; otherwise the asylum arrangements would now appear to be excellent and complete. A handsome chapel has been opened during the year, capable of containing 611 persons, and we are pleased to observe that the character of the services is varied to suit different tastes. "The services are about an hour and a quarter in length. They are made as attractive and as little monotonous as possible, by the introduction of music. On the Sunday afternoons there is an excellent choir of about twenty-four voices from among the officers and servants, kindly assisted by several leading members of the choirs of churches in the town. Full choral service, with an anthem, is regularly performed, and the psalms are chanted, usually to simple single chants. In the morning the service is, musically, much plainer, the psalms and versicles being read, and the chants and psalm-tunes being chiefly taken in unison. One of the objects contemplated by the difference between the musical character of the morning and afternoon services, is to endeavour to meet the tastes of those who think chanting the psalms scarcely devotional, and of the still larger population who are soothed and devoutly impressed by good church music."