

are devoted to the comfort and recovery of the patients, and which are managed by Committees of independent gentlemen, such as form the Committees of County Asylums, who derive no pecuniary or other benefit from their connection with them.

Clause 8, sub-section 3, provides that no person shall be received as a lunatic in a hospital under an order on the application of a member of the Managing Committee of the Hospital. This provision seems both unnecessary and unfair to those who, associated with these institutions solely for philanthropic purposes, devote much time and trouble to their management, and who, approving of their constitution, and having an intimate knowledge of their character and arrangements, would naturally be desirous of selecting them, in case of need, in preference to other classes of asylums in whose constitution they might not have so much confidence.*

Clause 53, in its present form, is considered to be peculiarly objectionable.

While admitting the propriety of some provision whereby the Commissioners in Lunacy can enforce compliance with their reasonable requirements, there is probably no precedent for such extensive powers, practically without appeal, being given by an Act of Parliament to any department over large public institutions which, for many years, have been fulfilling a great public requirement, and which, as the reports of the Commissioners in Lunacy bear witness, have been conducted with efficiency and success.

It must also be noticed that, in this clause especially, a responsibility, under severe penalties, is thrown upon the Superintendent of the Hospital, which he, as the paid servant of the Committee, could have no possible power of discharging except by their permission. The objectionable character of this clause would be greatly diminished if it were so varied as to give power to the Secretary of State to take independent action against the Hospital, in the event of the reasonable requirements of the Commissioners not being complied with, and upon their representation; right of appeal to Parliament, or to some practical body, being, at the same time, conferred upon the hospital authorities.

A Theistic Monomaniac's Suicide.

A book full of interest and of ghastly instruction might be compiled from newspaper cuttings of extraordinary suicides. Of these few would be more startling than one recently reported at Kemerton near Tewkesbury. The head gardener to a Mrs. Holland, named Adams, aged 40, was found burnt to a cinder in the root-house. The under-gardener had known him for two years, and having been informed that he was

* In our opinion the same objection applies to the restriction on signing a medical certificate.—[EDS].

missing one Monday morning, made search for him, and, in doing so, had his attention drawn to smoke issuing from the root-house in the garden. There, after extinguishing the fire with assistance, the remains of the deceased were found, although they could not be identified. A can used for petroleum, a flask with brandy in it, and a small benzoline lamp were also there. What remained of the body was lying face downwards on the fire of burning wood.

The root-house spoken of in his evidence is an excavation with a brick roof, used for keeping roots, &c., in winter time. In the floor was a square hole six feet by five feet, and about a foot deep. The hole is filled with charred wood and a few logs partly burned, all quite greasy with the melted flesh of the unfortunate man. The heat of the flames must have been very great, for the door-posts were half burnt away, as also was the ivy overhanging the doorway. Of the deceased nothing was left but blackened bones, chiefly the backbone and thighbones in one piece, and several small pieces of bone. Of the flesh nothing whatever remained, except a piece of the heart. Even the skull was unrecognizable.

A hole had been dug in the floor of the house, and the wood must have been carefully laid in it. This witness had seen him in his usual health on the previous Sunday, and he had never given any indication of his not being in his right mind.

The unfortunate man's mother, Mrs. Adams, stated that he got up on the Monday at 4 o'clock, and had said on the previous Saturday that if the weather continued the same he would have to get up early to go to the vinery. He always came back to breakfast about 8 o'clock. When he was missing, search was made for him at the mother's request, with the result already stated.

Then comes the explanation of the suicide in the form of letters placed in his writing-desk on the Monday morning, one being addressed to his mother and the other to Mr. Reuben Smith.

The latter is as follows (the former being identical with the exception that it was addressed to his mother as "recipient for the whole jury of women") :—

" My dear Sir,—I make you the recipient of this charge to the whole jury of men, and you will find a true verdict upon it according to the evidence set before you.

" God has commanded me to burn my body ; I have done so in the root-house in the kitchen garden as a protest against Christianity. To pronounce sentence upon it in the following terms :—

" That it is high treason against the majesty of God.

" A libel upon His works.

- " And a degradation of the reason of man and woman.
 " The Lord is the whole spiritual power of man.
 " The Spirit the whole spiritual power of woman.
 " And have no claim to equality with God.
 " Absalom and Christ are the same persons.
 " Make your prayers direct to God.
 " God, who is judge of all, hath judged me.
 " With the permission of God I shall return again in about three months, more or less, newly recreated.
 " My wife as my helpmeet will accompany me.
 " We shall be fully endowed with the prerogative of God's Commission.
 " Our duties then will be to rearrange the machinery of Government, to rewrite the Bible, leaving out the transgressions of man and woman, chronology, history, deeds of prowess, and other objectionable matter, and honour the pure and valuable precepts only.
 " Woman will be redeemed from the original curse passed upon her body, and will have a separate government to manage her own affairs.
 " I have been content to address God as my master.
 " You will do well to reduce yourselves to subjects, and to consider that you are the sons and daughters of man and woman only.
 " Your loyal and faithful friend and servant,
 " SAMUEL A. ADAMS."

The mother stated that she had never seen anything peculiar about her son's behaviour; he was the same as anyone else in manner or conversation. It turned out, however, from her evidence that Adams was confined 15 years ago in the Lancaster Asylum. He had lost his wife in May, 1886, and this made him melancholy for some time. He had no children. After his wife died his mother came to live with him. When she last saw him alive on the Sunday night about 10 o'clock, he seemed quite happy and jocular; better than she had seen him for a long time. This remark shows that the symptoms of mental disorder following his wife's death had in reality never quite departed.

The coroner pointed out to the jury that they must take into consideration the fact that Adams had been confined in a lunatic asylum. He thought the letters proved that he was of unsound mind. There was nothing to show that the fumes of the oil suffocated him; but the position of the body indicated that he had laid himself down upon the fire.

The jury immediately returned a verdict that the deceased committed suicide while in a state of unsound mind.

We have thought it well to place this case on record. A theist, he was a religious monomaniac. He had heard a voice commanding him to do the deadly act, and it is quite

consistent with the mother's evidence that he was happy and jocular. Granting the premises, his conduct was but natural. He was proud of being thus employed by God himself. He expected to return to earth in about three months, recreated, and his wife would accompany him as his helpmeet, both of them endowed with extraordinary powers. Had he committed a murder, and written no letters, the evidence of the under-gardener and of the mother would have left the impression on the minds of a jury that he was a responsible being, and the judge would have laid down the law, with characteristic emphasis, that unless the jury were satisfied that he did not know the nature and quality of the act which he had committed, they must find him guilty.

In regard to the letters themselves, it may be said that, while affording ample proof of insanity in Adams, in England, in the year of grace 1887, they would not have necessarily been so in all other persons, in every country and in every age. A Mahdi might arise to-morrow in the Soudan, who might write a letter to the same effect, and immolate himself for what, to him, would be a great cause, and the carrying out of a Divinely-appointed commission, and yet possess a brain entirely free from any pathological changes. On the other hand, a case like this of Adams is an illustration of what some religious fanatics may really have been in all ages and countries. They are yet far from having disappeared from the face of the earth.

The Houghton Tragedy.

The event described in the following paragraph in the daily papers, is decidedly unusual, and as such seems worthy of being placed on record. It has reference to the death of McCann, the murderer of a miner on New Year's Eve last.

THE HOUGHTON TRAGEDY.—THE DEATH OF McCANN.—On Saturday morning, an inquest was held in the Chief Warder's office in Durham Gaol, before Mr. John Graham, coroner, on the body of John McCann (31), miner, who, as already stated, died in the prison infirmary on the previous day.—Chief Warder Proctor identified the body as that of John McCann, who was admitted to the gaol on the 15th January last, on the charge of the wilful murder of John Dixon, miner, at Houghton-le-Spring on New Year's Eve. He was tried before Mr. Justice Day on the 26th January,