

*The Report of the Sussex County Lunatic Asylum.*

The report itself contains nothing new beyond a statement of the fact, which our readers will find enlarged upon elsewhere in these pages, that the Roman Bath had proved a valuable therapeutic agent, particularly in cases of melancholia. Forty sailors and marines have been sent by government from Haslar Hospital to the Sussex Asylum. The report contains a full and skilfully-drawn statement of accounts, and we observe that the omissions noticed in the North and East Ridings' Report, do not occur here. The average weekly expenditure for each patient was 10*s.* 8*½d.*; the weekly charge made for patients in non-contributing unions was 14*s.*, and for private patients 16*s.*; the appropriation of so much of these payments as was in excess of cost, enabled the patients from contributing unions to be charged only at the rate of 10*s.* 3*d.* per week. The appropriation of this extra charge upon out county patients and non-contributing boroughs, is a question of much importance. It is one of those things which the statute has left loose; and which has accordingly been dealt with at the pleasure of the visitors of the different asylums. In Sussex and in York we see it dealt with to reduce the maintenance rate, and no doubt this is the usual mode of its appropriation; but in other counties it has been maintained that this charge is really a rent-charge for the use of the building, and ought therefore to be appropriated to the maintenance of the building. In this manner it has been appropriated in the Somerset Asylum, and we are pleased to remark in the report of that asylum, that the visitors give Dr. Boyd the credit for having economically increased the accommodation of the asylum by 50 per cent., mainly through the appropriation of this charge made upon his patients. In the asylum from which we write, there are 142 patients from non-contributing boroughs, each of whom pays a rent-charge of 3*s.* 6*d.* a week, a payment which amounts to the important aggregate of £1292 4*s.* per annum. This also has been appropriated as a building fund, that is, to pay for the additions, improvements, and repairs, which would otherwise be paid for out of the county rate. If, however, it were appropriated to reduce the payments for maintenance of the 500 patients chargeable to parishes in the county, the reduction so effected would be at the rate of about 1*s.* a week per head.

It is to be regretted that no attempt has been made to regulate this matter by law, for not only does its present condition prevent any just comparison being made of the economy of management in different county asylums, but it is a matter which if left thus loose, is liable to give rise to contending opinion. Not only has the right appropriation of this money not been determined, but the persons have not been indicated who have the right to dispose of it in any

manner; and the question consequently arises, and has been mooted from the county whence we write, whether the visitors of the asylum have any power to use this money in any way, or whether it ought not to be disposed of by the justices in quarter sessions.

A short time since, moreover, a bill was introduced into parliament with clauses to compel the visitors of county asylums to provide accommodation for patients from non-contributing boroughs for which, of course, fair payment was to be made. This payment would be nothing more than the rent-charge of which we are speaking; and surely if there is any probability that such contracts with boroughs will be made compulsory upon the visitors of county asylums, the appropriation of such funds should not be left undetermined, as in the present rather slovenly omission of the statute.

Upon Dr. Robertson's own report will follow well the *Report of the Provincial Hospital for the Insane at Halifax, Nova Scotia*, because the establishment of this institution has had to be reorganised, and the superintendent, Dr. De Wolfe, says that the reorganization has been effected upon the principles laid down by Dr. Robertson in the pages of this journal.

"In re-organising, reference was made to the views of Miss Dix, as propounded to the superintendent, as well as to the mode adopted at one of the new English asylums, namely, that at Hayward's Heath, Sussex, opened 25th July, 1859. The superintendent of the Sussex Asylum, C. Lockhart Robertson, Esq., M.D. Cantab., is entitled to every consideration, as well from his position as Honorary Secretary to the Association of Medical Officers of Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane, as from his experience in the specialty.

"In a descriptive notice of the new Sussex Asylum, in the 'Journal of Mental Science' for April, 1860, the duties and position of the officers, &c., of the establishment are minutely set forth. These formed a basis for the plan adopted here, corresponding as they do with the views of Dr. Conolly and Dr. Kirkbride, than whom no higher authorities on the subject are to be found in England or America."

Under the head of elopements, escapes as we should say, Dr. De Wolfe gives an account of the effect produced by one patient upon many others, which is fortunately a difficulty not often met with in institutions for the insane.

"In the autumn a pyromaniac, a young man of highly prepossessing appearance, was committed, who found the confinement irksome and intolerable. He not only avowed his intention of making his escape at all hazards, but preached to others the doctrine that they were not rightfully confined here, that they ought to be at liberty, and that if freedom were not granted they ought to take it. In three weeks he instilled his belief into several other patients, and persuaded them to elope, himself setting the example.

"Having no suitable enclosure, no barrier indeed to prevent escapes,

and but few attendants, it is not to be wondered at that one patient went as far as Mount Thom, one to Lawrence-town, one to Hammonds Plains, one to Preston, two to Dartmouth, one to Newport, and another to Windsor Road. With a single exception, all were overtaken and brought back, and the epidemic appears to have subsided."

It has been pleasant to remark, from the paragraph in the Halifax report above quoted, that the pages of this journal sometimes carry instruction to remote parts of the world; it is by no means the first time that we have had the gratification of being assured of this fact. We indeed receive the strongest assurances from the colonies of the high estimation in which the governors and superintendents of asylums hold the information conveyed to them by this journal, and of which, in their inability to avail themselves of more direct means of information on asylum management, they stand much in need.

*Report of the Cheshire County Asylum.*

This asylum, containing 365 patients, has been enlarged so as to afford accommodation for 510 patients, the full amount of which, however, the visitors hope will not be wanted for eight or ten years to come. To employ the unoccupied portion of the building usefully and profitably, they are determined to take in private patients at the rate of fourteen shillings a week. Mr. Brushfield, the medical superintendent, remarks on the gradual decrease of the curable patients who are admitted into the asylum, which he attributes to the gradual increase of aged and broken down cases which are admitted. We observe that he, as well as several other superintendents, are in expectation that the clause in the new poor-law removal act, which imposes the cost of pauper lunatics upon the common fund of unions, instead of on the parishes where they have settlements, will operate by inducing the local authorities to send cases of insanity to the asylum in an early and curable stage of disease. We are inclined to think that if the clause does operate in this manner it will also have the effect of inducing the local authorities to press upon asylums many chronic cases of aged persons who would otherwise receive relief in union houses, or in their own homes. An octogenarian pauper, in the second childhood of old age, so long as his condition is looked upon as the natural result of senile decay, will receive relief from the funds of his parish; but if the overseers can make out that he is a lunatic, and obtain his admission into the asylum, they will shift the charge of maintaining him from their own local rates to the general fund of the union. Those who are best acquainted with the motives under which overseers and guardians generally determine to act, will be able to foretell whether there will now be no tendency to press patients into the asylum, not for the sake of any benefit they may receive there, but with the penny-wise motive of saving the parish rates. We by