

than when he urged the necessity of surrounding a refractory patient with a number of attendants, so that he might submit at once, or be overpowered by numbers without any dangerous struggle. If the staff of an asylum were large enough to admit of this in all cases, and if the Commissioners' recommendation were carried out, "that in all cases in which there are difficulties in dressing or undressing patients, in bathing them, or inducing them to take food, an inspector (or head attendant) should be required to be present," these fatal injuries would, we think, be less frequent.

Broken Ribs and Asylum Attendants.

IN the Annual Report of the Rainhill Asylum, the Medical Superintendent, Dr. Rogers, makes the following excellent remarks in regard to accidents in asylums, and the unjust accusations that have been based upon them:—

If these statements had been confined to the general press it would not perhaps have been desirable to refer to them in this report, but when a professional journal like "The Lancet," which might be supposed to possess more authentic sources of information, adopts these views and gravely informs its readers "that it is a common custom for stout attendants to travel upon their knees up and down the prostrate bodies of unpleasant patients by way of giving them a hint to cease from troubling, and that most asylum superintendents must have abundant proofs of the existence of the practice," it becomes, I conceive, the duty of medical superintendents to repudiate any knowledge of such a custom, lest by their silence they may seem to acquiesce in the truth of the assertion, and also on behalf of their attendants, who have not the opportunity of repelling such accusations, but who nevertheless are capable of feeling their injustice. Speaking for myself I know of no such custom, nor do I believe that any patient was ever injured in that manner during the twelve years that I have been connected with this institution. In the case I have before alluded to, if such a mode of treatment had been adopted, instead of three ribs having been broken, not one would have remained whole.

To assume that every such injury, of which the precise time and manner of occurrence cannot be ascertained, has been a deliberate act of brutality on the part of an attendant, is to reverse the fundamental doctrine of the law, that a person is to be held innocent until proved to be guilty. "The Lancet" would go further than this, and in default of convicting the guilty would punish the innocent.

It is to the interest of medical superintendents of asylums, as much for their own reputation as for the sake of humanity, to detect acts of

violence on the part of attendants, and to punish instead of condoning them.

The class of patients to whom these injuries are generally found to occur are the subjects of general paralysis, in whom very exalted notions of their own power and ability, and a strong propensity to order and direct every one else, is combined with great muscular weakness, diminished sensibility to pain, and inability to protect themselves. Their inflated ideas of self-importance lead them into quarrels with other patients, their muscular weakness places them at a disadvantage, and their diminished sensibility hinders them from making known any injuries they may have received, whilst their general mental confusion renders their narration of events often extremely untrustworthy. A case in point occurs to my recollection as I write. A man, a brick-layer by trade, was observed to be rather poorly, and on my examining him I found that he had sustained a fracture of one or more ribs. Having removed him to the Infirmary, I asked him how it had occurred; he, without hesitation, replied that the attendant of his ward had knocked him down and kicked him; shortly afterwards he told the chief attendant a different version, and eventually he gave me a detailed account of the manner in which the injury had been inflicted by another patient. He said that he was let out of his ward with other patients, and instead of going into the airing-court he went upstairs to a ward he had previously been in to repair the chimney, and he was met by another patient, who pushed him down. On my inquiring of this patient he corroborated the other's account in a characteristic manner, saying, "he wanted to come up into my ward to build a chimney six miles high, and I pushed him down stairs." I instance this, and I could multiply instances, as the type of a case in which a patient was unable to appreciate the injury he had sustained, or to give at first a correct account of how it had happened, and in whom, if it had not been detected, a fatal result might have occurred, and the attendant would have rested under the imputation of having caused it, although in reality he knew nothing about it.

Admitting, however, the fact that patients have at different times been done to death by the gross and brutal violence of certain attendants, in common justice, is that sufficient ground for assuming that it is a recognised mode of treatment?

By the last annual report of the Commissioners in Lunacy it will be found that there were on the 1st January, 1869, 28,728 pauper lunatics in Asylums, Hospitals, and Licensed Houses in England and Wales. Allowing for the increase during the year, and for the sake of round numbers, I will call them 30,000, and allowing one attendant for every 12 patients gives a staff of 2,500 men and women employed as attendants. Are all these to be branded as inhuman and brutal because one in a thousand is convicted of crime? With as much justice might a whole regiment be denounced as murderers because one private shoots the sergeant of his company.

Attendants in asylums follow their calling for the sake of earning an honest livelihood just as any other class of men and women do; their duties are onerous, their hours of duty long, and their responsibilities great; they are subject to insults, to taunts, to mis-representations, to violence; they can achieve no glory by faithfully performing their duties, their kindest acts and intentions are often misconstrued, they are liable to instant dismissal, and even to prosecution if they are guilty of violence, under no matter what provocation, and they receive about the same rate of remuneration as domestic servants; for this they are required to return good words for evil, gentleness for violence, and kindness for the most cutting taunts and insults.

It should be borne in mind that madness recruits its most numerous victims not from the temperate, the order-loving, and the law-abiding classes of society (though these are to be found among the number); that mental disease generally has the effect of developing the bad qualities and repressing the good by lessening the power of self-restraint; that constant association with persons of degraded mental faculties exercise a deteriorating influence on those who are submitted to it; and that medical superintendents of asylums have no special opportunities of securing the services of persons who have a more just appreciation of the principles of the Christian religion, who are more imbued with the "Enthusiasm of Humanity," than are to be found in the ordinary walks of life; but, notwithstanding, I confidently believe that a large proportion of asylum attendants perform their duties with a conscientiousness, and a singleness of purpose that would do credit to any class of the community; and the kind expressions towards attendants contained in the numerous letters that I receive from discharged patients is evidence at least as worthy of credit as any statement made by "ex-attendants" who have probably themselves been dismissed from their situations for misconduct.

But whilst taking a favourable view of the character and conduct of attendants generally, I consider that the supervision over them should be most vigilant, and this as much for the benefit of the painstaking and conscientious, whose merits will thus be better appreciated, as for the indolent and indifferent, who will thereby be stimulated to greater exertions.

Hydrate of Chloral.

Among the various contributions which are appearing on all sides upon the value of the hydrate of chloral, we may quote the opinion of the able superintendent of the Devon Asylum. Dr. Saunders says:—

"In the remedial treatment of the class of diseases which come under the care of the Asylum physician, no medicine deserves a fuller trial than the chloral hydrate which was first introduced to the notice