

The Medical Certificate evidently does not cover the ground, and it is obviously desirable that there should be some other procedure whereby a known lunatic could be placed or detained under care, when from any reason the written evidence of a medical man is not available.

The crimes which result from this defect of the law appeal by their striking character to the popular mind. They are, however, of little importance in comparison with the mass of mental suffering, prolonged even to lifelong lunacy, produced by the hindrances to treatment which the law entails in demanding written evidence (as on oath), from a medical man, as the only means whereby a sick person can be appropriately treated.

The "liberty of the subject" has been the popular cry on which this lunacy legislation has been based, with the object of preventing the most improbable possibility of a sane person being sent to an asylum. In this zeal for liberty many hundreds of sick persons are annually deprived of the liberty of obtaining the medical treatment they require, obtaining in exchange only the liberty to commit suicide or homicide.

The public should be clearly instructed that the annually recurring and possibly increasing horrors from the crimes of "lunatics at large" are the price it pays, under the existing lunacy law, for protection from an illusory danger to the "liberty of the subject." "Oh, liberty! liberty! how many crimes are committed in thy name."

---

*The Evil of Irresponsible Criticism.*

Perusing certain remarks made recently by a Mr. Berdoe in a lay paper, anent a therapeutic enquiry by Dr. Berkley at the City Asylum, Baltimore, and weighing these after a consideration of criticisms to be found in the *British Medical Journal* of September 18th and September 25th last, the thoughtful ratepayer—especially of the Metropolis, where Mr. Berdoe's superfluous energies find a vent—may well pray to be saved from his friends. Everywhere, and especially, probably, in the Metropolis, any painstaking investigation having for its object the determination of means whereby mental disorders may be arrested before they pass into the interminable night of chronic dementia, would be cordially approved of by those who contribute to the maintenance of county asylums, which look to become vast

hostelries for the incurable in mind. Dr. Berkley records in the *Bulletin of the Johns Hopkins Hospital* for July, 1897, the results of the administration of thyroid extract in cases that "had either passed, or were about to pass, the limit of time in which recovery could be confidently expected." We need not here describe Dr. Berkley's work, of which our readers can judge in the original. We content ourselves with the observation that it is the record of the trial of a medicinal agent, carried out scientifically, and for the benefit of the patient. To Mr. Berdoe, however, it appears that Dr. Berkley's work was "a study of poisoning, as a poison might be tested on an animal." Viewing the matter in this lurid light, Mr. Berdoe felt forcibly that the interests of the public were in jeopardy, and, thus agitated in mind, was constrained to seek out a sympathetic confidant, whom he found in the *Daily Chronicle*. The "up-to-date" and democratic organ upon which Mr. Berdoe's choice fell was far too astute to miss the opportunity of heading a letter "Experiments on Lunatics;" and consequently we find his feelings concentrated under that harrowing title in an issue of the above newspaper. Those members of the profession who may have seen his letter, though it may be denied them to gauge the intensity of Mr. Berdoe's feelings, will not fail correctly to estimate his action in this matter. They cannot but regret that he should have condescended, not merely to have addressed his strictures upon a medical colleague to a lay organ, but further—to quote from our medical contemporary above-mentioned—to have made statements which "are not accurate," and to have given "a very unfair version of the facts."

---

*The Evil of Unrestricted Zeal.*

But, while we condemn libel on a professional brother, while we protest, alike in the interests of humanity and of our profession, against any stupid effort to excite prejudice against the proper use of new methods, we would denounce any real "experiment" upon lunatics unhesitatingly. It is not too much to say that such a procedure would be cowardly, immoral and infamous. On similar grounds we are inclined to condemn the practice of pressing into the service of science criminals under sentence of death. This has, however, been occasionally carried out. Thus Küchenmeister