

The Jamaica Lunatic Asylum.

Medical men and the non-professional members of the community interested in the welfare of the insane of this country, have, after many years' labor in the cause, succeeded in bringing about a comparatively satisfactory condition of the public and private asylums, and they may be forgiven the exhibition of a certain spirit of repose and self-gratulation. The mass of abuses has been hurled aside and the reformers of British lunatic asylums have only minor peccadilloes to seize upon, and the only prospect of more exciting work for them is to be found in an exploration of the condition of patients *not* in asylums. A Lunacy Commission armed with considerable and very elastic powers is likewise in full operation, which, although too small for all the functions rightly devolving upon it, can at least so supervise public asylums and licensed houses that irregularities of any magnitude can have but a short-lived existence.

English doctors and other folk, moreover, travel abroad on the continent of Europe, and report on their return, the rapid improvements they witness in the provision made for the insane, in the treatment they are subjected to, and in the state of public opinion respecting them and their malady. Hence the notes of rejoicing over the happy change everywhere brought about in the condition of the insane;—over the happy era ushered in by the labours of Pinel and perfected by those of Charlesworth, Conolly and others whose names appear in every history of the development of the modern system of treating lunatics.

However, setting aside half-civilized lands as Turkey and Egypt, and taking into consideration only those states or colonies admitted within the pale of civilization, it may be asked, have we evidence that the lauded improvements in the treatment of mental disorder have been realized in all of them? How are the insane treated in our own colonies and dependencies? What are the lunacy laws in force in those dependencies and who are their administrators? We fear indeed that there are few medical and non-medical philanthropists who can give an answer at all full and satisfactory to these questions. To one or two individuals something may be known of the asylums in this or in that colony, but of the state of the insane in the colonies generally, next to nothing is understood in the parent country.

Canada is known to have two asylums of good reputation, at Quebec and Toronto; in Malta an excellent new asylum has been recently built, which we had the satisfaction of visiting, but when we have enumerated these and the Indian asylums noted by Dr. Wise, we have arrived at the end of the list of colonial asylums of which we have even a very moderate share of information. Of the asylums in Hindostan indeed little can be said in their favor. On the other hand, what information does transpire respecting the insane, and the institutions for them in other dependencies of Great Britain, is certainly of a character which reflects discredit both upon Colonial Legislatures and the Home Government. Gibraltar is truly a small dependency, yet it undoubtedly has its proportion of lunatics, who, if we have not been misinformed have no other lodging than the prison cells of the Tower. If we come nearer home and look to dependencies which ought to form an integral part of the United Kingdom, assimilated in constitution and laws to the parent state as much as the Isle of Wight, viz—the Channel Islands, we discover from official records, the miserable condition of their insane population and the absence of asylum provision, although the dignitaries of these little self-governing states have had the necessity of making such provision pressed upon them for the last ten years, and have besides, actually had the proposition to supply it under their distinguished consideration for a similar period. Something may perhaps be shortly effected as the Lunacy Commissioners inform us in their last (13th) Report that they have succeeded in getting a local commission of inquiry appointed in Jersey. Then again, if we look to one immediate dependency of the Colonial Office, viz—Ceylon, what do we find except an illustration of the gross neglect which may thrive under the fostering care of red-tape and the “circumlocution office.” Dr. Davy will tell the history of the what-was-to-be Ceylon Asylum, which has never got beyond its rudimentary existence in official papers and plans. Australia again, is growing into a mighty empire, but the only account one can get at, respecting its insane colonists is, that they are farmed out to private individuals, and that public asylums for their proper care and treatment are yet unprovided. We have been led to pen these remarks from having before us several papers and books referring to the state of the insane in one of the oldest Colonies of Great Britain, viz., Jamaica. Accepting the statements in these papers with ever so large an allowance for individual enthusiasm and local party feeling,

and taking chiefly those borne out by official reports, there yet remains ample evidence of a state of things disgraceful to the authorities of the Island, and reflecting disgrace upon the parent country, however helpless the latter may be in obviating it when called upon to deal with a colony proud of the privilege of self-government. Already public attention has been drawn to the state of the Jamaica Asylum by several writers in the *Times*, and it will be a great satisfaction to ourselves if, by any remarks in these pages, we can extend the public interest in the matter, and in any degree contribute to bring about a reform of the gross abuses and cruelties of which we read with so much pain and regret.

The building occupied by lunatics, or as it claims to be called the Lunatic Asylum of Jamaica, constitutes a section of the Kingston General Hospital, and is under the same management. When it is stated that this so-called asylum has been built half-a-century, the presumption will be *à priori* that it is at best a very indifferent place for the treatment of the insane according to modern notions on the subject. In its design it has certainly the merit of simplicity, and needs no diagram to illustrate it; a few words will explain its structural peculiarities to the least architecturally disposed mind. Suppose a small space of ground, 150 feet square, surrounded by a high wall, and divided into two by a lower fence, and suppose a one-story block of building placed in each half, parallel the one to the other, 120 feet in length, 16 in width, divided into twelve rooms or cells, and having a piazza about eight feet wide extending its whole length; if the reader can realize the resultant sort of building, he will have a clear apprehension of the general plan of the Jamaica Asylum. A slight extension in the form of a few rooms in a detached wing or outbuilding on one side of the two rows of cells, is also, we believe, reckoned a portion of the asylum, though we are not clear, from the accounts we have, whether this third section, is as a rule, appropriated to patients. If we look into the interior of this interesting institution, the same Spartan simplicity prevails. Bare whitewashed walls, a stone floor, a sufficiently strong door, with an open barred window by its side, thoughtfully furnished with a shutter; such are the few structural details to notice. An innovation, in the shape of iron-bedsteads, has, we believe, been allowed to supersede, in some cells, the good old-fashioned sort of sloping stout wooden shelf, which afforded a pleasing incline to the weary limbs reposing upon it. If any reader has a difficulty in

picturing to his mind the sort of bedstead referred to, he may see, or at least might have seen a little while since, the model of it in our military guard-houses. Having described the bedstead, the account of the fittings is about complete, except that it omits from the list the tub supplied for a urinal, and one or more mats, or perhaps a quilt or two. The roof of the buildings is covered by those little flat pieces of wood seen on châlets in Switzerland and elsewhere, known as 'shingle,' one unfortunate property of which is its proclivity to decay, an evil from which the roof in question is not exempt; moreover, it is affirmed, that besides the bad state of repair of the roof of the asylum, the courts or yards are ill-paved, ill-drained, often redolent with exhalations from the cess-pools, of which several are in the precincts of the institution, and overlooked by neighbouring houses.

Having thus far sketched the building, let us now look to its inmates. These belong to the different classes of Jamaica society, for the island possesses no private asylum, and, therefore, all that can be done for a patient of the wealthier and better-nurtured classes, is to give him a cell to himself, with what few extra fittings in it are thought necessary. So far well, the best thing is done for the afflicted individual which the place admits of. But what of the other inmates, how many are they: and does this appropriation of a room to one individual curtail their comforts? Here will arise a little difficulty to persuade the reader the accommodation is satisfactory, however satisfied he may be with the general details of the structure. Allowing that there are six patients in the establishment (a number within the average) occupying six of the twenty-four cells) that one other room is occupied by an attendant) there then remain only seventeen rooms for the rest of the inmates, the total of whom varies between 90 and 100. Consequently, 100 lunatics had to be disposed of in these seventeen rooms, and supposing them equally distributed, six would have to be shut in each; but according to the management followed, there are in some cells more, in others, less than that number of inmates. The majority of the cells are of equal dimensions, measuring $13\frac{1}{2}$ feet by 9 feet, but a few, it appears, are rather larger.

The Government engineer who gave in a report on the building, states that some two or three rooms, occupied by three patients, had a cubic capacity of 1,492 feet, giving 497 cubic feet of air to each inmate. In what is described as a middle row, the cells contain only 1,215 cubic feet, or 405

feet each for three patients. On the female side, he refers to rooms containing respectively twelve and four patients, so as to afford only 214 cubic feet in the one case, and 287 cubic feet in the other ; the cubic capacity of the two classes of rooms being respectively 2,570 feet and 1,147 feet.

Passing on to matters relating to the government and internal management, we may note that the Governor of the Island is the Patron of the Institution, and can exercise great power. Under him there was a commission composed of seven members, but this body was abolished in 1858, and a director appointed, subject to a sort of visiting committee, which presides over the General Hospital adjoining, as well as the lunatic wards. The medical care of the lunatics devolves on the House Surgeon of the General Hospital who resides in the town, at some distance from the institution, and is not indifferent to private practice. Respecting the attendants, our information is conflicting, owing it seems to one party calling every sort of employé on the premises by that name, whilst the other esteems those only as attendants who are constantly concerned in tending the inmates. The real state of things appears however to be, that there is a so-called male and female superintendent, non-resident officers, having very slender pay, who live in the town some distance off, and retire to their homes about six o'clock in the evening ; some four day laborers, engaged on the premises during the usual hours of labor ; a couple of old watchmen, who are supposed to afford security to the compound establishment of General Hospital and Asylum, and to attend to the wants of the sick in the former ; and lastly, a woman lodged on the female side, and receiving a small pittance, who is dignified with the name of an attendant, and specially charged with the care of the female lunatics at night. The watchmen can enter either division of the asylum, and visit those patients, or groups of patients, whom they may conceive to require their kind services.

Some of the female lunatic patients are employed in the laundry, common both to the hospital and asylum, and there mingle with other women, and with male servants of the establishment. Many of the male lunatics are also employed and some few of them away from the asylum ; but except manual labor, no other of the several details of asylum management, comprehended under the term of moral treatment, appear to be put into operation either for the male or female inmates.

Such is, in outline, the Jamaica Lunatic Asylum ; but

brief as that outline is, and deficient as it is in details respecting the management and treatment pursued, no very lively powers of imagination or of reflection, are needed for the deduction that it is a totally unfit habitation for lunatics. Leaving out of the question the positive statements made by some inhabitants of the island, as though they could be gainsayed—which, by the way, they do not seem to be to a material extent), that the grossest irregularities and many cruelties have occurred among the insane occupants of those horrid cells, there is ample reason for denouncing the institution in its position, its structure, and management, as a receptacle for the insane. It is contended that it is an unhealthy situation: but if local doctors disagree on this point, there can be no denying the great disadvantages entailed on it as an appanage of a general hospital, situated in a densely populated town, abutting upon streets, and overlooked by adjacent dwellings. Nor will there be many persons found at the present day who would sanction the enclosure of such an institution within high walls, who would tolerate a building which rendered classification impossible, or who would approve of the short distance and the imperfect division between the section devoted to males and that to females; a degree of division so slight as to offer no sufficient obstacle to the communication of the two sexes, and no impediment to the transmission of sound from one side to the other, whether by way of uproar or lamentation.

Who again would be the apologist for the wretched rooms, their stone floors, and unglazed windows; and what can be said of the crowding of half-a-dozen,—nay, a dozen, as is admitted, of human beings, disordered in mind and it may be in body also, in one such wretched cell, some 14 feet by 10 feet square, and this too in a tropical climate; what can be said, we repeat, except that such a proceeding is a barbarity to be paralleled only in Algiers in its worst times. It is painful to the human mind to contemplate the condition of the poor sufferers during the ten or eleven hours they are thus shut up together, virtually without any supervision, or any security from the moral depravity or mad fury of some of their fellow prisoners. Whether the particular statements made relative to accidents, injuries, quarrels, fights, and various crimes are proved to the satisfaction of those in the island, who will see nothing wrong in the establishment, or whether they are not, every person of common sense will say that nothing is more probable than that irregularities and crimes of all sorts should transpire in the company of

several lunatics, imprisoned in such miserable dens that space to sleep and air to breathe is not to be had by all of them.

It would be positively a reflection upon the good sense of our readers, to enter into details respecting the medical and moral management of this execrable receptacle for the insane, with the intent of showing wherein they are defective and laden with abuses and wrongs. We shall, therefore, willingly avoid them, and proceed to some notes on proposed reforms, and on the doings of the authorities in Jamaica and England, in reference to asylum provision. Those who are conversant with Dr. Conolly's *Treatise on the Construction and Management of Asylums*, will remember that it contains a plan of a proposed Lunatic Asylum for Jamaica, designed by Mr. Harris, who has acted as architect to the Hanwell Asylum, and to one or two others in this country. But they will be surprised to learn that this plan, although adopted by the Colonial Legislature, has never yet been completed. Dr. Conolly's book bears the date 1847 in its title page; for thirteen years, therefore, has the erection of the asylum been delayed, and the much-to-be-pitied lunatics of the island have been let drag on for those many years a wretched existence, in one of the vilest buildings bearing the title of an asylum.

It should, however, be noticed, in justice to many of the medical men attached to the General Hospital, that the total unfitness of the asylum for its purpose, and the miserable condition, and often barbarous treatment of the inmates, have been reported on for a long series of years. In truth, the local authorities appear to have been convinced of the same facts, for we find a vote of £20,000 granted by the legislature for the erection of a proper asylum, so long ago as 1843, and that in 1847 the building designed by Mr. Harris was actually commenced. Between that period and the year 1851, £20,659 were expended on the structure, besides convict labor, valued at £10,000; that is, above £30,000. This was certainly a handsome sum contributed to ameliorate the condition of the insane, and indicative of an earnestness, on the part of some at least, to effect that object. It will, therefore, appear well nigh inexplicable, that this large sum has for all practical purposes been thrown away; all that was accomplished by it was the erection of the carcasses of three of the six wards or sections designed by the architect, or less than one-half of the entire edifice. By the plan, accommodation was proposed for 250 patients,

but the portion carried out being only one-half of it, minus the official residence and general offices, all that was attained for £30,000 was bare living space for 125 inmates, at the rate of £250 per head.

But this remarkable story of an attempt to build an asylum does not end here. Having proceeded thus far, the managers began to discover that the structure they had taken in hand was not exactly what was wanted for the lunatics in that tropical climate; and being both alarmed at the cost already incurred, and annoyed by the objections of assembly men and tax-payers, to the yearly repeated demand for votes for an edifice which it seemed was never to be completed, and threatened a perpetual drain upon the finances,—the sagacious resolution was taken to stop the works, and leave the incomplete structure to moulder into ruins, as another monumental example of foolish builders, who do not first sit down and count the cost of their plan.

We cannot stay to inquire the reason of these extraordinary proceedings and of the expenditure of so princely a sum of money upon so inadequate a result. They speak ill of the results of committing to small colonies their own government, and indicate strongly the atmosphere of corruption and jobbery which must prevail in the Island of Jamaica. And what can be urged in extenuation of the folly and apathy which has let the new asylum so far as completed, remain unoccupied for 10 years, except for the period of a month or six weeks, on two occasions, when cholera devastated the town and carried off five-sixths of those attacked by it in the purlieu of the general hospital. Even the unfinished wards of the new building, notwithstanding any discovered defects in their ventilation, or in the adaptation of their arrangements to the climate, would have afforded a very far superior residence for the unfortunate lunatics than the prison house in which they are confined. But this provisional occupation of the new asylum, pending the completion of the whole structure, has been from some inexplicable reason, neglected, and the small additional sum of money which some years since would have sufficed to render its occupation practicable, would be far from sufficient now that much *matériel* once collected and purchased towards completing and fitting the building has been recklessly dispersed and sold, and that the once partially cleared and drained site has relapsed, as neglected land will soon do in a moist, tropical climate, into a swampy plot overgrown with under-wood.

The wretchedness and entire unfitness of the present so-called asylum, the extravagance and jobbery which have distinguished the attempt to erect a proper asylum, and the singular folly that has presided over all the proceedings relative to the desertion of the already erected portions, have not, as would be naturally expected on the supposition that humanity and common sense had some admirers in Jamaica, failed to raise protests from many inhabitants of the island. Agitation of the whole matter in the pages of the press, by pamphlets, and by discussions in the House of Assembly has proceeded for several years, but hitherto without effect. In the Houses of Legislature motions have been fruitlessly made for a committee or a commission to inquire into the whole matter of the state and condition of the asylum and the lunatics of the island, for they have been opposed by members of the administration several of whom are likewise members of the governing body of the general hospital and asylum. Contradictory statements have been put forward in the House of Assembly; at one time, it has oddly enough been represented that the Assembly had not the power to appoint a Committee of Inquiry, but that the proposition must come from the Governor, who, on his part, has declared it was not for him to take the initiative; at another it has been stated that the whole matter has been referred to the Colonial Board of the parent country, which would command an investigation and direct the Governor in the course to be pursued; and lastly, when it was proposed that a Commissioner should be sent for from England, the free and independent spirits in the island were indignant at the interference of the old country, whilst those of the more servile class raised the question whether the costs were to fall on the tax-payers of England, or to come from their own pockets, in which latter case, the only wish was that no inquiry should be proceeded with.

Such is, on a brief review, the perplexing and unpromising state of the question respecting the care and treatment of the insane in Jamaica, and, as may well be imagined, such it bids fair to remain under the auspices of a free constitution in a colony, a very small proportion of whose population is at all fitted for self-government. It is a party question, and the party in power, headed by the Governor is opposed to an investigation, and manifests a staunch conservatism in behalf of the old lunatic wards, and, when a better provision for their unhappy inmates is demanded, finds an

excellent argument against it in the straitened resources of the island.

Under these circumstances it is difficult to suggest a remedy. It would be well could the Colonial Government interfere, and bring the machinery of the English Lunatic Commission to bear upon the whole matter, and through its agency conduct a thorough investigation into the state of lunatics, and of the receptacles for them, not only in Jamaica, but in all the West India colonies; for undoubtedly, such an extended inquiry is much needed. There are only three small asylums to serve for the insane population of the whole of our West India possessions, and there is no organization for ascertaining the condition of that population, or for bringing it under the cognizance and care of any responsible board or commission. For the credit of humanity we should fear the results of a strict search into the state of lunatics in the colonies referred to where the insane and their institutions have been little thought of or wholly neglected, from our knowledge of what similar investigations have revealed in this country, in which the social condition of the whole population has in comparison been so well attended to, and the social state of the people of a much higher order.

The chief impediment to the direct action of the Home Government in lunacy matters, both in Jamaica and the other colonies adjacent, is their possession of self-government, whereby they can constitutionally object to any interference in their internal affairs; and under the circumstances, the right of resistance to schemes concocted in the Colonial Office, for the management of such matters as the public provision for their lunatics, must be held sacred. Yet withal, the English Government has very considerable indirect power, and can so propound measures of domestic policy, by medium of the Governor as the Queen's representative, that only a very refractory colonial legislature would attempt to resist them, particularly when designed for the prosperity and happiness of the inhabitants. Moreover, the royal prerogative was asserted and acceded to only a few years since, (in 1843), when Dr. Milroy acted as her Majesty's Inspector for the West Indies, and was invested with considerable powers to inquire into the prevalence of cholera and to prescribe sanitary measures; and it would only be a parallel proceeding to appoint Lunacy Inspectors for these same colonies, with a view of removing those blemishes in their moral condition and reputation, which

we have had occasion to notice in one at least of their most important members. It is evidently useless to leave the reform of the abuses denounced in the Jamaica Asylum, in the hands of the island authorities. For thirteen years the lunatics have been allowed to languish in an institution, declared totally unfit for their occupation some years antecedently; and the only guarantee that they will not be let remain there for as many years more, is to be looked for from the Home Government. Lastly, what is done, must be done energetically and speedily. Deference to the position of the Governor of the colony, or to the circumstance of his being a partisan in the matter agitated, must not be suffered to stand in the way of a complete investigation, which to be just and satisfactory, must be conducted chiefly by persons perfectly unprejudiced, unmixed in island politics, and acquainted with the nature of insanity and the wants of the insane; and such individuals, it is no unfair reflection on the colonists to say, are not to be found in the island. Where can English philanthropists find a better field for their activity than in promoting measures for the relief, and urging them upon the Government, in behalf of the neglected and maltreated lunatics in our West India Colonies.

J. T. A.

The Work and the Counterwork ; or the Religious Revival in Belfast. With an explanation of the Physical Phenomena.
By EDWARD A. STOPFORD, Archdeacon of Meath. Sixth Edition. Dublin : Hodges, Smith, & Co. 1859.

Every day convinces us more clearly of the intimate connexion between Psychology and Religion. The fact now seems to have become recognised even by those who have ever been most unwilling to admit it. The history of the various outbursts of enthusiasm or fanaticism by which mankind have been harassed, have had but small effect in producing this admission, upon a large class of minds, who have viewed them as special visitations of the Almighty, for the punishment of the guilty and the purification of the faithful.

During the last quarter of a century, however, the Science

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