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THE EXTRA-ASYLUM DEPENDENT INSANE.

II. THE INSANE IN ALMSHOUSES.

In sharp contrast to the report of the condition of the patients referred to editorially in our last issue, is that of a large number of the 684 dependent insane who live in almshouses. The first complete visitation of the Massachusetts almshouses was made in 1884. At no time have they undergone a full inspection, with reference to the number and condition of the insane inmates, by medical visitors conversant with the requirements of the insane. Occasionally, of late years, the State Board has authorized visitation by medical specialists in insanity for this purpose. The result has been, as a careful reading even of the condensed accounts published by the Board will show, to reveal a deplorable amount of neglect and wrong treatment, due largely to ignorance by most keepers of almshouses and by local authorities of the widely different care and management required, as a rule, by their sane and insane charges. Nor has it been the medical visitor alone who has recognized this wretched state of affairs. In an account of the visitation of 130 almshouses, in several counties, by Mrs. Sarah M. Brown, which appears in the last report of the Board, we read that: "In many cases, the insane are simply kept on the premises; but, with the limited accommodations, they are improperly cared for. The towns, on the score of economy, attempt to do in this direction work which, on the whole, is poorly done." Again: "Quite a number of those visited by me were greatly infested with *vermin*."

The dirty and disorderly state of poorhouses in many of the towns, in regard to which specific statements are made, is simply disgraceful. An expert examination in the almshouse in Fall River caused quite an acrimonious controversy in that city, partly political, of course, but, as a result of which, the superintendence has been changed twice, and still a third time this month, although leaving the main requirement unfilled, namely, a new almshouse, in place of the present defective buildings.

We find, also, that occasional acute cases of insanity, instead of receiving legal commitment and asylum treatment in the early and curable stages of the disorder, have, by reason of the mild nature of the attack, and for the sake of saving expense to the towns, been confined in almshouses from the first. The intermixture of the sane and insane, male and female inmates, has been found to be not properly guarded against in not a few of the poorhouses. In respect to the following points: selection of cases; facts as to sickness and death of the insane; the amount of room, matters of cleanliness and hygiene; amount of restraint and seclusion; number and kind of "cages" and "cells"; the kind and amount of diet; the state of the bedding, clothing, warmth, bathing appliances, water-supply, etc. — unfavorable observations have been repeatedly made. These criticisms, let us emphasize, do not necessarily apply to certain of the almshouses of the larger cities, in some of which the care of the insane leaves little to be desired.

The recent endeavors of the State Board to remedy these evils appear to be well directed, and it is unfortunate that the work was not undertaken long since. The recent legislation in this direction, especially that compelling the removal of unsuitable cases from almshouses, and the yearly visitations now being made by the direction of the Board, are indications of its appreciation of the necessity of supervision, and its desire to ameliorate the lot of these unfortunates.

Whether the building be new or old; whether there be separate wards or other special quarters provided for the insane of one or of several towns, their proper care undoubtedly will, in great measure, depend on whether or not a conscientious and efficient keeper falls to their lot. Their supervision, like that of all other extra-asylum insane of this class, should be undertaken by competent medical men, practised in matters of lunacy, who shall be properly paid by the State to make regular and thorough inspection. In default of such means, the only humane step is, we believe, to gradually commit patients now in almshouses to their proper asylums. They differ in no respect, it should be remembered, from a large number already in asylums, who have the benefit of medical supervision.

In the present overcrowded state of these institutions this would be impracticable, although we doubt, should this course be followed, if the treatment of curable cases in the asylums would be so far hampered as to offset by any means the good to come from delivering a number of insane patients from squalor and neglect. At all events, this transfer will no longer be looked upon as unwise when the project of providing for the over-accumulation of insane in our asylums, which is advocated by most superintendents, is put into operation. We refer to the erection, near each asylum, of small, inexpensive buildings for the accommodation of the chronic insane, these additions being made to keep pace with the gradual increase in the population of the main establishment. By this

means, economy, ease of administration, nicer classification, and constant medical care would be ensured; and we should hear little of the poorhouse lunatics, whose pitiable lot should be, we think, the strongest incentive for hastening the adoption of this desirable arrangement.

We cannot leave this subject without calling the attention of physicians in our various towns to the fact that their communities are but little alive to the needs of these victims of confirmed mental disease; and that it is in their power to encourage inquiry into, and to aid in rectifying, abuse and neglect in this quarter. Appeals to the State authorities, such as are frequent in matters of public health, cannot be made by the patient, and are often not made by others, as local interests are not thought to be especially involved.

STUNNING AND BURNING FROM ELECTRIC-WIRES.

As an incident in the development of the use of electricity for mechanical purposes, a class of injuries has arisen which present certain peculiarities. "Linemen" and "electric-light trimmers" are the ones most frequently injured; and in the pursuit of their vocations, as in every other dangerous occupation, there develops a certain carelessness, which, at times, proves fatal.

As the extensive use of electricity is of comparatively recent date, only a few fatal injuries of this description have been published. The remarkable instantaneous death of a workman at the Health-Exhibit in London, and a similar death of a sailor on the Russian Imperial yacht "Livadia," led Sheild and Delépine to carefully note the post-mortem appearances in a case that came under their observation, which they have recorded.¹

They found that the blood remained fluid, and the heart was empty. They believe that it is quite possible to recognize an electric burn, not alone from its gross appearance, but also from certain peculiar microscopical appearances that exist in the blistered integument. The human body is, fortunately, a poor conductor of electricity; and it has been said by certain electricians, that a wire (in circuit) transmitting enough electricity to light fifteen lamps may be handled with impunity, if the circuit is not broken. Occasionally, however, a "lamp-trimmer" brushes against the wire with a wet rubber coat, or touches it with damp hands, thus breaking the circuit, and receiving a severe shock and burn. Three cases of this character occurred in Boston last autumn, where men received an electric-shock in the above manner. They were rendered unconscious, fell to the ground, and sustained, in addition to the bruising from the fall, a severe shock and local burns.

The burns were peculiar in that the tissues were completely destroyed, the surrounding parts anæ-

thetized, and that, at first, there was no local congestion of the surrounding skin; the reparative process was very slow and tedious.

The period of unconsciousness varied with the severity of the shock, which, in two of the cases, was recovered from in a few days.

Prof. George Buchanan² reports the case of a laborer, who was stunned and burned while working in the vicinity of a brush-light. The victim was engaged in handling a crane. By the wire of the light coming in contact with a chain attached to the crane, he was brought into the circuit. He was instantly "doubled up," his hands spasmodically grasped the chain, and in this position he was held for four minutes, until the lamp and chain were disconnected. The amount of shock was slight, but a full hour elapsed before consciousness returned; he then complained of a sensation of heat in the abdomen, and slight dimness of vision. There was a slight vesication on the hands, and at the point on the sole of the foot from which the current passed into the ground, a charred surface, two inches square, remained. It is certainly remarkable that so powerful a current could pass through the foot without causing more injury in its passage.

The treatment of these cases is essentially that adopted for severe nervous shocks, the burns being treated as their intensity may demand.

CALOMEL AS A DIURETIC.

A WRITER in the *Practitioner* has recently called attention to the diuretic properties of calomel. It has long been known that the addition of calomel to certain diuretics, as squills and digitalis, enhances the action of those drugs.

The researches of Jendrassick are exceedingly interesting in this connection. It appears that the diuretic action of calomel is not immediate, but manifests itself ordinarily the second, third, or fourth day, generally reaching its maximum the second day, and then declining. The amount of diuresis depends on two factors: the dose of calomel employed, and the abundance of the dropsical effusion existing at the time of administration of the medicament. In Jendrassick's first experiments, the dose of calomel was four grains, three or four times a day; but the diuretic effect is naturally proportional to the quantity of calomel absorbed. The best results are obtained when the first symptoms of mercurial poisoning show themselves: metallic taste, ptyalism, mild stomatitis. If the dose of calomel exceeds a certain limit it becomes purgative, and is carried off in the stools.

Jendrassick found that when once diuresis was induced by calomel, it lasted a long time, often not ceasing till the dropsical swellings had entirely disappeared; nor were further doses of the mercurial needed to keep up the effect. Calomel was found to

¹ Brit. Med. Jour., March 14, 1885.

² Lancet, February 13, 1886.

be especially useful in the dropsies of heart disease, with a sound state of the kidneys; in these cases, it proved itself a better diuretic, even, than digitalis.

The conclusions of Jendrassick have recently been confirmed by Collins in the *Medical Chronicle*, who has found two or three five-grain doses of calomel an incomparable diuretic in dropsical effusions.

MEDICAL NOTES.

— The Forty-Ninth Congress appropriated \$10,000 toward the approaching International Medical Congress to be held in Washington next September. It is provided that the amount appropriated is to be expended under such regulations as the Secretary of the Treasury may prescribe, also that no part of the appropriation shall go toward paying the personal expenses of any delegate, and no money shall be expended except upon vouchers to be approved by the Secretary of the Interior. The sum asked for by the Committee of the Congress was \$50,000.

— The *Pall Mall Gazette* has, in its endeavors after a new sensation, hit upon a *plébiscite*, in which the public are invited to record a vote on the "best doctor" in general; the "best woman's doctor"; the "best dentist"; the "best surgeon"; the "best-managed hospital," etc. "The usual prizes of £2 and £1 will be given to the two competitors whose coupons agree most nearly with the opinions of the majority." Meantime, our English brethren of the profession are very highly and properly incensed at the impertinence of the whole scheme.

— The National Dental Hospital of England, and the College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, have both decided to admit women for the study of dentistry. None have yet presented themselves, although the *Dental Register*, issued by the Medical Council, contains the names of twenty-two women, of whom sixteen practice in England, two in Scotland, and four in colonies. These women were all registered as being in practice before the passage of the "Dentist's Act." Thus it is seen that women are not rushing into the profession with the celerity which might be expected from the throwing open of the doors.

— The *London Medical Record* refers to two cases of rumination in man, reported by Dr. Johanessen in the *Norsk Magazin for Lægevidenskaben*, November, 1886. Case I, was a man, aged twenty-five, unmarried. At sixteen years old he had sudden pains in the chest and diplopia, and remained ill three weeks; he had also headache, noises in the ears, and gastric pains. On recovery, he remarked that food returned into his mouth, especially when after a meal he worked in a forward attitude. The regurgitations became more frequent, and after a few years occurred after every meal. Remastication occurred with the same satisfaction as at first. All kinds of food returned, solids and liquids. The rumination begins within a few minutes to half an hour after a meal, and lasts an hour or two.

The regurgitation is involuntary, and the patient has never tried to prevent it. He has vomited only twice in his life, and then only after too much alcohol. During the last six months he has noticed a change in his condition—the food regurgitated has been accompanied by a bitter substance of disagreeable taste—and he is thinner. Case 2, was a young medical man in fair health.

— The United States Consul, at Buenos Ayres, in his dispatch to the United States Treasury Department, dated January 7, 1887, says: "Cholera still exists in this city, but it makes but little progress in assuming an epidemic form. The average number of cases per day since my last dispatch (December 6th), has not exceeded 22. The greatest number of reported cases in one day occurred on the 30th ultimo, when the number reached 57, since which time it has steadily declined, and on yesterday the number was only 11 in the city, with its population of 400,000 souls." He encloses a clipping from the *Buenos Ayres Standard*, from which it is learned that during the months of November and December there were 871 cases of cholera, and 474 deaths from that disease. The consul also states that "the disease has scarcely made its appearance except in closely packed tenement-houses (conventillos of the lower classes and in the suburbs, which are without pipe and hydrant water. In the interior of the Argentine Republic, however, the disease has assumed the proportions of an epidemic. In Rosario, during the last month, the daily number of cases averaged 60 to 100, while about 70 per cent. were fatal. In Mendoza the development of the disease has been most remarkable, and the population of that city of 20,000 has been almost decimated; and in the country districts the disease was equally fatal. In Tucuman the number of cases has on some days been as high as 500, of which about one-half proved fatal. Indeed, the panic at one time was so great that it was not possible to obtain the requisite assistance to bury the dead. In nearly all the other interior cities the disease has been very virulent and fatal, but, not confining itself to centres of population, it has ravaged entire provinces, and farmers (estancieros) and camp men have in great numbers succumbed to it. I am happy to say that with medical assistance, disinfectants, medicines, and a large supply of good nurses, the disease seems to have greatly abated during the last two weeks, and the hope is entertained that it will soon have run its course."

BOSTON.

— The death of Hon. Zenas M. Crane, the veteran paper manufacturer of Dalton, Mass., which occurred last week, is said to have revealed in him the anonymous contributor of \$10,000, which sum was received by the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, five years ago in response to an appeal for subscriptions.

— The Directors of the West End Nursery and Infant's Hospital, 37 Blossom Street, urgently appeal for further aid to enable them to continue the work of

the institution. It is only through a still further response to the needs of the work, of at least \$3,000, that the thirty babies now under the shelter of the nursery can be cared for during the coming year, and aid extended to the other helpless infants who may demand the care of charity.

— A shocking accident occurred on the morning of March 14th, whereby a local train on the "Dedham Branch" of the Boston and Providence Railroad was precipitated through a broken bridge, a distance of twenty-five or thirty feet, into the road-way below, at a point in West Roxbury. Of nine cars, composing the train, five thus fell through between the abutments, where they were piled upon each other. About twenty-five persons were killed outright, and between eighty and one hundred injured, many of them very severely. Both the morgues in Boston were filled with the bodies of the dead, some of which were crushed so as to prevent identification, except by the dress and other personal effects. One woman had her head completely severed from the body, and another had the head cleft downwards, so that one side of the skull and face were removed. In these more extensive mutilations, comparatively little blood was lost. One of the cars took fire from the stove, but the flames were extinguished promptly, so that this so common source of danger and horror was removed from the case. The wounded were many of them taken at once to their homes, and five or six patients were admitted to the City Hospital and the Massachusetts General, each; while others were dressed in the out-patient departments, and sent to their homes.

NEW YORK.

— The New York State Academy of Veterinary Science and Comparative Pathology held a meeting March 4th, at which there was adopted a set of resolutions for presentation to the Legislature, in which it was stated that, while during the past year, 37,330 deaths occurred in New York, 16,000 of this number were in children under five years of age, and that the Academy believed that many of these deaths were caused by diseased meat and adulterated milk. There were only four milk inspectors and one meat inspector for the whole city, and the Academy regard the establishment of public abattoirs, when cattle could be examined before and after being slaughtered, and also of depots for the examination of milk. Furthermore, it was asked that the number of inspectors should be increased, and that every candidate applying for the position of inspector should first be examined by a commission consisting of one member from the Board of Health, another from the Microscopical Society, and the third from the State Academy of Veterinary Science. An amendment was added to the effect that every veterinary surgeon should be required by law to report to the Board of Health all cases of contagious disease that came under his notice among animals. At this meeting Dr. J. P. Gerrish read a paper

on tuberculosis in man and in cattle, and a general discussion of the subject followed.

— Governor Hill has at last, after nine months' delay, signed an order approving of the removal of General Shaler, President of the City Board of Health, by Mayor Grace; the General in the meanwhile having continued to hold his position at the head of the Department. It is said that he will adopt legal measures for re-installment in office, but it seems hardly likely that they will be successful, as the feeling is strong in the community that a man who has practically been twice convicted of bribery, although the jury did not agree at either trial, is not a fit person to hold one of the most important among the municipal offices.

— The Mayor is said to have appointed Mr. James C. Bayles, editor of *The Iron Age*, and an expert sanitary engineer of high repute, President of the Board of Health, in the place of General Shaler.

— The Crosby bill now before the Legislature providing for a single head for the New York Board of Health, has been modified, in accordance with the wishes of Mayor Hewitt, so as to establish a three-headed commission, the President of which is to be the executive officer of the Board, and to be solely responsible for the discharge of all duties of an executive nature. The other two commissioners are to be clothed with judicial and legislative powers, and to act in conjunction with the President in these functions.

— Dr. Lucien Damainville has been appointed a police surgeon to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Dr. Francis M. Purroy.

— The annual commencement of the Medical Department of the University of the City of New York, was held at the Academy of Music, March 8th, when degrees were conferred upon one hundred and fifty-one graduates. Gilmore's band furnished the music, and the address to the class was made by the Rev. John R. Paxton, D.D.

— The twenty-first annual commencement of the New York College of Dentistry was held at Chickering Hall, March 9th. The graduates numbered fifty-one, and were addressed by W. A. Purrington, Esq., Counsel for the Medical Societies of the State and County of New York.

— Dr. W. S. Searle, family physician of the late Henry Ward Beecher, has made a statement of his case in which he says that prior to the attack of apoplexy, Mr. Beecher was a remarkably sound man for his age. The only complaints to which he had ever been subject were tonsillitis, so-called bilious attacks, and hay-fever. So far as could be known, his only organic trouble was a very limited amount of chronic nephritis. Like all corpulent men, he labored somewhat under shortness of breath, and, without having made an examination, Dr. Searle feared that he might perhaps have some fatty degeneration of the

heart. But the powerful and persistent action of this organ during his late illness proved this apprehension to be unfounded, while no man living had more capacious or better innervated lungs than his. The seat of the apoplexy was apparently in the right hemisphere, involving the motor tract, and the rupture was no doubt one of a small vessel, as indicated by the gradual and progressive character of the paralysis which resulted. By Saturday morning the effusion had become sufficiently extensive to produce almost total loss of motion in the left arm, as well as to seriously impair the control of the corresponding lower extremity. Sensation, in these parts, however, was still intact; but the hæmorrhage went on, the paralysis became more and more marked, until it finally became entire in respect of both motion and sensation. Thus, on Sunday morning it was discovered that sensation was completely abolished in the whole left side of the face, and even in the conjunctiva. Subsequently the disease did not deviate from the usual course observed, and death resulted from the gradual failure of the vital powers.

— Dr. William Young has just got a verdict in the Superior Court of \$3,538.88, which is the full amount of the bill, with interest, which he claimed against the estate of the late Frederick P. James, a wealthy banker, for professional services rendered from December, 1881, to May, 1884, when Mr. James died. For fifteen years before his death, he was a paralytic, and had various complicating affections of the different organs. The defence claimed that the bill was too high, and that Dr. Young had profited in certain stock speculations through Mr. James's knowledge of the market; but it was proved that the doctor had paid him commissions as he would have done to any other broker.

— The sum of \$53,050 mentioned last week in connection with the Hospital Saturday and Sunday Collection was the entire amount collected, and the necessary expenses had to be deducted from this: Mt. Sinai Hospital received the largest share of any, \$5,727; St. Luke's the next, \$4,486; The Hospital for Ruptured and Crippled next, \$4,121; the Presbyterian next, \$3,625; and the German next, \$3,555. The other hospitals received amounts varying from \$1,929 (St. Mary's Free Hospital for Sick Children), to \$354, (the Home for Convalescents). The different amounts were assigned at a recent meeting of the Distributing Committee, which consists of Mayor Hewett, Morris H. Jesup, Jesse Seligman, Cornelius Vanderbilt and ex-Mayor Edward Cooper.

— The seventh anniversary of the Home for Convalescents was celebrated in Dr. Crosby's church on the 9th of March, when addresses were made by the Rev. Drs. Crosby and Ormiston and others. This is a most worthy charity, the object of which is to give temporary shelter and comfort to those who have been discharged from the hospitals not wholly recovered from the effects of illness, and it is the only insti-

tution of the kind in the city. It was opened in June, 1880, with six beds, and since that time it has received 775 inmates, for many of whom it has obtained employment on their full recovery. It now has a building in East 118th Street, provided with twenty beds.

Miscellany.

A DEATH FROM CHLOROFORM IN TRENTON, NEW JERSEY.

A DEATH from the administration of chloroform is reported from Trenton, N. J., and the *Daily American* of Trenton, contains a communication from a resident physician in which the unfortunate occurrence serves as the text for a reiteration of sound doctrines as to the relative safety and desirability of ether and chloroform.

CARBOLIC ACID IN THE TREATMENT OF VOMITING, AND PAINFUL DYSPEPSIA.

THE well-known anæsthetic and analgesic effects of carbolic acid were first utilized in the treatment of vomiting by Dr. Edward Garroway,¹ of England. He found drop doses of carbolic acid in some suitable vehicle to allay as by magic hysterical vomiting and the vomiting of pregnancy. Drs. Dixon and Beran afterwards employed the same remedy in the same dose for the relief of some forms of painful dyspepsia; the latter associated with it a certain proportion of the *acetum opii* (English black drops).

Recently, Pacholier² has essayed the combination recommended by Dr. Beran, in obstinate cases of chlorotic vomiting, in the vomiting of pregnancy, in gastralgia from dilatation of the stomach, and from anæmic, nervous causes; and he reports remarkable success from this palliative treatment of these affections. His formula is as follows:

Pure deliquescent Carbolic Acid,	1 part.
English Black Drops,	3 parts.
Mix. Dose — four drops in a little sweetened water three times a day, a few minutes after meals.	

POISONING FROM A VAGINAL INJECTION OF SUBLIMATE.

THE *Therapeutic Gazette* publishes the following instructive case, which originally appeared in the *Centralblatt für Gynäkologie*, by Fleischmann, of Prague. A perfectly healthy primipara, aged seventeen, exhibited no symptoms of kidney disease, or of any other complication of pregnancy. To disinfect the vagina before labor, two douches of 1 to 2,000 solution of sublimate were given, one before and one after examination by a midwife. It was noticed that a small amount of bloody mucus was expelled from the vagina after the douches. In a few hours abdominal pain, diarrhœa and a rise of temperature occurred, all the symptoms and lesions of mercurial poisoning developed, nephritis, salivation and continued diarrhœa, and, after giving birth to a living child, the patient died in coma on the ninth day after the douches were

¹ British Medical Journal, March 13th, 1869.

² Bulletin Gen. de Thérapeutique, February 15th, 1887.