

ART. VIII.—*Vermont and Ohio Asylums for the Insane.*

WE shall be careful to apprise our readers, from time to time, of the state and progress of *all* the public asylums for the insane of which we receive authentic reports. We must distribute our notices, however, through successive numbers, in such order and to such an extent, as convenience may allow.

We begin with the border State of VERMONT, and are happy to give so favourable an account of its benevolent and successful efforts.

During the eighth year of its history, 232 patients were under treatment—96 were admitted, 74 discharged, and 158 remained. During the whole term of eight years, 631 patients have been admitted, 473 discharged, and 153 remain. Of the 631 admitted patients, 281 have recovered, or more than 44 per cent.; 39 have died or about 6 per cent. The patients were received from ten different States, Iowa Territory, the Canadas and Bermuda.

The report states:

“That of the discharged who had been insane not exceeding six months, 89 per cent. have recovered; while of those whose insanity had been of longer duration, the proportion of the restored has been but 34 per cent., showing, (says the Governor in his message to the legislature,) what should be universally known, the great importance of early efforts to secure for the insane the benefits of the institution. The reports show that inveterate cases, supposed to be beyond the reach of perfect cure, may be very greatly ameliorated. Several touching examples of these are given in the report of the Trustees, in which persons have, after a derangement of from twelve to sixty years, been taken, in conditions of horrid wretchedness, from cages and cells, their chains knocked off, and within a few weeks from their entrance into the Asylum, have been persuaded to enjoy the luxury of comfortable beds, and with safety admitted to receive their food with knives and forks at a common table.”

We cannot but connect with this another extract from the message, in which the duty of suitable public provision for this class of sufferers is urged with commendable earnestness.

“There is no conceivable claim upon Christian charity so strong as that which comes from those who are destitute alike of reason, and of appro-

private means for its restoration. That claim, it is feared, will not be adequately met by towns chargeable with the support and maintenance of such poor—the furnishing them the means of restoration to mental soundness, or even of ameliorating their insanity in cases where it is supposed to be incurable, constituting, under existing laws, no part of the legal duty of the towns. Whether, if such duty was imposed on them, it would result in securing the needed relief, or securing it as promptly and effectually as it should be, may perhaps admit of a question. I submit whether further provision should not be made by law, for securing the benefits of the asylum to all the insane poor within the State.”

Gratifying evidences of improvement in accommodations and interior economy, in this asylum, are derived from the reports of the officers. The buildings have been so enlarged as to admit 60 additional patients. Two-hundred can now be received and classified with ease. A convenient edifice has also been erected, 100 feet by 32, for shops, store-rooms, &c. The expense of a residence at the asylum is but \$2 per week, or \$80 by the year, and it is said, that at this low charge, the institution has more than sustained itself.

The library belonging to the asylum contains 500 volumes, and by exchanging “The Asylum Journal,” (a periodical prepared and published by the inmates,) they receive more than 200 newspapers from various parts of the Union.

Some interesting cases are stated in the report of the Superintendent, showing, in the first place, that the incurably insane may, at a small expense, be made comfortable, happy and useful at an asylum, who require the severest restraint, and must be, after all, the occasion of constant anxiety and terror to their friends, if they remain at home.

Secondly, that long-continued and seemingly inveterate cases of insanity, do sometimes yield to judicious hospital treatment, and hence no case should be despaired of, and none should be hastily abandoned because the signs of convalescence delay their appearance.

Thirdly, that the earlier the disease is brought under hospital treatment, the more probable, prompt, and permanent will be the relief.

We subjoin two or three cases from the report of the Superintendent, illustrating the first two points. The third is too obvious and well-established to need illustration.

“In September, 1840, a lady who had been insane seven years, and had apparently passed into a demented state, was brought to this asylum. Her friends did not expect her restoration, but supposed she would be much more comfortable in an asylum than in any other place. During the first two years after her admission, our efforts seemed unavailing. The third year her improvement was slow but gradual, and at the end of the third year, there were decided proofs of her convalescence:

“She remained with us until February, 1844, a term of three years and five months, and then returned to her family perfectly restored. There were seven or eight years of her insanity of which she now has no recollection. She continues well, and her mind has now all the energy and vigour which it possessed before she was insane. Had she been removed from the asylum, as is too frequently the case, at the end of three, six, or twelve months, she would undoubtedly have remained insane for life.

“We have in the Asylum an incurable case of a young man about thirty years of age, who has been insane for ten years. He had been under the care of different persons, who had made him as comfortable as could be expected out of a public Asylum. The last year his mother took him home and had him chained to the floor, being the only situation in which it was safe for her to take care of him; and manifested for him all that sympathy which none but a mother feels, and bestowed upon him all that kind assiduity which none but a mother would perform. But all her kindness, attention and sympathy was misconstrued by her unhappy son, and his condition was made more miserable than when taken care of by strangers. After remaining in this situation one year, he was unchained and brought to this asylum, about four months ago. From the time of his admission, he has worn no article of restraint, has destroyed no property, has been at large in our halls, has assisted on the farm, has associated with the rest, and is now comfortable and happy.”

“One case was brought to us four and a half years ago, of a man who had been insane more than twelve years. During the four years previous to his admission he had not worn any article of clothing, and had been caged up in a cellar without feeling the influence of any fire. A nest of straw was his only bed and covering. He was so violent that his keepers thought it necessary and applied an iron ring around his neck, which was riveted on, so that they could hold him when they changed his bed of straw. In this miserable condition he was taken from the cellar, and dressed, and brought to the Vermont Asylum. The ring was immediately removed from his neck. He has worn clothing, has been furnished with a comfortable bed, and has come to the table and has used a knife and fork ever since he was first admitted. He has not destroyed three dollars' worth of clothing, bed and bedding since he came to the asylum. He has been most of the time pleasantly and usefully employed about the institution.”

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The *State Insane Asylum* of Ohio, is established at Columbus, a beautiful town on the Scioto River nearly in the centre of the State and upon the National Road. Our space will admit but a meagre notice of this large and flourishing asylum, occupying a spot, which but about thirty years ago was a compact forest; now it is the abode of six or eight thousand active and intelligent people; the seat of justice and law for the State; and the site of a Penitentiary, Asylums for the Deaf and Dumb, for the Blind and for the Insane; and various other institutions of reli-

gion, learning and benevolence, which are the pride and ornament of any Commonwealth. But our present business is with the Insane Asylum.

The number of patients received during the last year, is two hundred and sixteen, viz:—one hundred and sixteen males, and one hundred females; and the whole number discharged is seventy. Of these, forty were recovered, five improved, eighteen remained in a stationary condition and six died. The disbursements of the State during the last year, in the support of the Lunatic Asylum, amounted to \$13,463 99, and the expenditure on the new addition to the buildings to \$11,190 14. The receipts of the institution, during the year, amounted to \$3,581 91.

The per centage of recoveries on the old cases, 18.75; on the new cases, 89.47; showing the great importance of having insane persons committed to the Asylum as soon as possible after the commencement of their insanity. Number now in the Asylum 79 males, 67 females.

The whole number of patients admitted since the Asylum was opened, (six years since,) is 541, of whom 287 were males and 254 females. Whole number discharged in that time, 395; of whom 243 had recovered, 58 died, and the rest had improved or were considered incurable.

The supposed remote and exciting causes of the whole number are various. Among them are the following: intemperance, 39; ill health, 101; puerperal, 32; constitutional, 32; domestic trouble, 29; disappointed love, 8; religious of all kinds, 62; loss of property, 19; prosperity, 1. Physical causes, 239; moral causes, 221. In personal appearance, 312 had fair complexion, 229 dark complexion; 154 light hair, 387 dark hair; 333 light eyes, 208 dark eyes; 441 spare habit, 100 full habit. In occupation, 117 were farmers, the rest from all the learned professions and mechanical pursuits.

We believe these circumstances are noticed in reports of insane asylums, rather as the *materiaux* from which some plausible theory may perhaps be formed when the stock is sufficiently large, than as particularly valuable in themselves. Few conjectures can be more uncertain in their nature, than those which

concern the laws of the mind and the subtle influences under which they act.

The completion of two new wings to the Asylum is near at hand, and when finished they will accommodate 200 more patients. The liberality of this provision is as creditable to the sound policy, as it is to the humanity of the State authorities.