

rialists consider greatly exorbitant for land which the most competent authorities have valued at £35 only,\* in other words, at less than one-third of the price given by the committee; and your memorialists would remark further, that the annual outlay for water (after laying the pipes, etc.) would eventually raise the cost of the site to a much higher price.

"Your memorialists respectfully submit that the objections assigned above are valid, whether considered with respect to the future well being of the establishment, or in respect to the feelings and interests of your memorialists and the ratepayers of the county at large.

"Your memorialists are of opinion that for the comfort and well-being of the poor unfortunate persons who are to become the inmates of the asylum, it is requisite above all things to have a plentiful supply of good water, a genial atmosphere, and a salubrious locality, as very essential to physical health; and, if possible, where the landscape is varied and picturesque—the contemplation of which may be a source of daily pleasure to the unhappy lunatic, and may tend to awaken new emotions and create wider sympathies in his bosom, and thus materially conduce to his restoration; and your memorialists pledge themselves that several such sites may be obtained in convenient localities in this county.

"Your memorialists therefore humbly pray that your honourable Board will withhold your approval of the said proposed site."

A similar memorial will be forwarded to Lord Palmerston, the Home Secretary.

It is stated that this memorial has been signed by the great bulk of the tradesmen and ratepayers of the city of Carlisle, and the towns and districts of the county; and it is a significant fact, that the medical men of Carlisle to the number of fourteen have signed a similar petition. "The Boards of Guardians have also taken up the question in a most earnest and resolute spirit." Unfortunately, Mr. Grainger, who was sent by the Commissioners in Lunacy for that purpose, has examined the site, and has approved of it. The statements in the memorial appear to be more than sufficient why that approval should be reconsidered.

#### *To the Editor of the Asylum Journal.*

SIR,—During the debate in the House of Commons on the 28th of February last on a motion for a Committee of Enquiry on Nunneries, Mr. T. Chambers, the mover, referred to the insanity of Miss Knight in the nunnery at Taunton, in the following words: "The house would probably remember that considerable attention was called to a case at Taunton, in which Miss Knight, a convert, had had the misfortune to lose her senses, and notwithstanding the consent of the bishop had been obtained, Miss Jerminham, the lady superioress, would not suffer a Roman Catholic doctor to visit her, would not suffer her to go to Bristol, even to a convent there, but against the wishes and consent of her brother, determined to take her abroad to die in Belgium; and it was only by the most strenuous

exertions that her brother succeeded, amid the jeers and insults of the priest, in getting her away, and she died in this country. Surely if they wanted an instance of despotic power, that was one."

As this case presents several points of interest to the mental pathologist, I beg to offer you some remarks upon it, for insertion in the *Asylum Journal*. At the same time I shall correct two important errors in Mr. Chambers's statement, and avoid as much as possible any political or religious bias.

In the first place, Mr. Chambers was wrong in stating Miss Knight to be a convert. So far was this from being the case, that her father, a Roman Catholic gentleman of Devonshire, had always educated her in his own faith. Her aunt was a sister in the Taunton nunnery, and her three sisters had been educated in the same religious house.

Secondly, Mr. Chambers was wrong in stating, that the lady superioress would not suffer a Roman Catholic doctor to visit the patient. Dr. O'Brien, the Roman Catholic physician to St. Peter's Hospital for the Insane at Bristol, did visit Miss Knight at the convent, and pronounced it as his opinion that a cure could be effected if she was removed to Clifton and placed under his treatment.

The points of medical interest in this melancholy case are three: the duration of the insanity, the power of detaining an insane person in a nunnery without reference to the Commissioners in Lunacy, and the homœopathic treatment of insanity adopted by the lady superioress.

The relatives of the unfortunate lady and her religious superiors differ in their opinion respecting the cause and the duration of her insanity. The confessors and the lady superioress of the convent affirm, that they had been aware of the existence of mental disease for a period of six years before an outbreak of violence had rendered it necessary to make the fact known to her relations. During this long period she had been the victim of various insane delusions; in the spring of last year the tranquillity of demeanor which she had hitherto retained, passed into a state of maniacal excitement. The children going to the convent school were obliged to be sent by an unusual way to avoid her cries; the poor patient became unmanageable, and it was necessary that the quietude of the convent should be restored by her removal. Her aged parents and her brother were now informed of the calamity, and of the intention of the lady superioress to remove her to the convent of Menin in Belgium, an establishment devoted to the reception of insane nuns. The relations felt great repugnance to concur in this act of deportation, and urged that the patient should be placed in a convent near Bristol, under the medical care of Dr. O'Brien, a Catholic physician well skilled in the treatment of mental disorders, and a friend of the family. To this request, apparently so reasonable, the lady superioress made the most strenuous opposition, an opposition which can only be understood by remembering, that the physician and the lady holding the same faith in religion, entertained rival creeds in medicine. The lady superioress was a fanatical sectarian of the Hannehman faith, and her conduct in opposing Dr. O'Brien

\* It was purchased for £33 per acre three years ago.

must be viewed by the light of this fact. The Catholic bishop of Clifton added his entreaties to those of Miss Knight's relatives for her removal to Bristol: a circumstance leaving no doubt that Miss Jerminham's opposition was actuated not so much by religious scruples as by indignation at her "outraged homœopathy."

Miss Knight was eventually removed, but after so protracted a delay, that she subsequently lived only three weeks.

Is it not reasonable to suppose, that if this unhappy lady had met with proper treatment at the earlier stage of her disease, her mind might have been restored and her life preserved?

Finally, let me ask, what would be the power of the Commissioners in Lunacy in a similar case? By the eighth section of the Act for the Regulation of the Care and Treatment of Lunatics, no single patient can be taken charge of in a private house without proper certificates sent to the Commissioners, and without official visitation. Would this enactment affect an insane patient in a convent, or would the character of the house interpose a bar between the Commissioners and their duties? If so, would the same occur in the instance of any other religious community, an Anglican sisterhood, for example, or an Agapemone? Should this be the case, and should any person wish to establish a perfectly close uninspected asylum for ladies, it will only be necessary to give it the character of a religious community, and to defy the law and the Commissioners.

In the present instance the patient was insane six years before her relations knew it, and was treated homœopathically; she appears in other respects to have received personal kindness and humane attention at the hands of her superior. Is it impossible that in other places both the globules and the humanity may be omitted, and the old system of treating the insane in convents and monasteries described by Esquirol should be resorted to?

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

M. D.

London, March 3rd, 1854.

#### *Statistics of the Insane in France.*

A report on the situation of lunatics in the asylums of Paris was presented to the council general of the Seine in its last session. On the 31st December, 1852, the number of lunatics under treatment was 3182. In all France there were 16,719, which made one in every 2123 of the total population; but in Paris and the department of the Seine the proportion was one in every 474. This was owing to the fact, that at Paris idiots are readily admitted into asylums, in order to prevent them from becoming a spectacle or being ill-treated in the streets; whereas, in the country, great numbers not being dangerous are allowed to be at large, and are generally treated kindly by everybody. In 51 years the number of lunatics in Paris and the department of the Seine has increased from 946 to 3182. The number of admissions in the course of 1852 was 1509. Amongst them were 454 traders, 149 members of liberal professions, 26 agriculturists, etc.;

976 of them belonged to Paris, 182 to the department of the Seine, the rest to different parts of France, and 61 to foreign countries. Amongst the foreigners were 1 Englishman, 21 Belgians, 16 Sardinians, 6 Prussians, and 5 Germans. The number of persons discharged in the course of the year was 849; of cured, 556; and of deaths, 462. The proportion of deaths was nearly half less than in the ordinary hospitals; and the principal cause of them was paralysis, that disease having caused 194 of the total. All the lunatics of Paris and the department are not treated in the asylums of Paris; some are maintained in those of the provinces—Blois, Maréville (Muerthe), Armentières (Nord), etc.—but at the expense of Paris. The expense of each lunatic per day in Paris was 1*l.* 50*c.* for men, and 1*l.* 20*c.* for women; and in the provinces it averaged from 1*l.* to 1*l.* 25*c.* The total expense of the year was 1,438,432*l.* 73*c.*; of which 464,065*l.* were disbursed in the asylum of Bicêtre, 592,543*l.* in that of La Salpêtrière, and the rest in the provinces. Part of the expense, however, has to be repaid by the families of the patients, the prefecture of police, and the rural communes; and another part by foreign governments—amongst which governments that of England owes 711*l.* 30*c.*; that of Belgium, 6344*l.* 50*c.*; and that of Piedmont, 2867*l.* 80*c.* By a law of 1838, two sorts of admissions into lunatic asylums are allowed: one, called "voluntary," is that of non-dangerous lunatics on the demand of their families; the second, called "official," is ordered by the prefecture of police, with respect to persons whose maladies are dangerous to themselves or others. Before 1838 the number of official admissions was less than that of voluntary admissions; from 1833 to 1838, for example, the former was 2821, and the latter 4242. But from 1838 to 1851, out of 16,716 admissions, 4163 were voluntary and 12,553 official. Of the 1509 admissions of 1852, 398 were voluntary and 1111 official. Up to the commencement of the nineteenth century, the laws did not occupy themselves with the condition of lunatics. Confounded with thieves and vagabonds, lunatics were confined in the prisons and hospitals. From a report presented in 1791 to the National Assembly by M. de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, it appears that at that time the number of lunatics was 1831. At that period two wards of the Hôtel-Dieu were reserved to the curable; but they were often placed three or four together, men and women in the same bed; the more violent were even bound with chains, and the other patients heard all day long their cries, or witnessed painful scenes. The incurables were placed at Bicêtre, La Salpêtrière, and the Petites-Maisons (at present Hospice des Ménages). The cells in which they were confined were only six feet square; light and air were admitted by the door; trundle beds, covered with straw and fastened to the walls, were all they had to sleep on; and water fell from the walls. In 1792, Dr. Pinel, physician of Bicêtre, and afterwards of La Salpêtrière, put an end to this frightful state of things. The creation of the Conseil General des Hospices in 1800 completed his undertaking. Since that time vast improvements have been introduced into the treatment of the insane. Spacious and healthy lodgings with boarded floors have been substituted for