

Canada Medical Journal.

MONTREAL, APRIL, 1865.

LUNATIC ASYLUMS.

A letter, copied from the *Montreal Herald*, appeared recently in the columns of the *Montreal Gazette*. The editor of that journal assumes it to be written by "a person who evidently understands the subject of Lunatic Asylums." We should say his acquaintance is not thorough, and would recommend that he be sent to one for an indefinite period to improve his knowledge of the requirements of such institutions. There is no necessity for the Government of Canada seeking for a site with a mansion already built, supplied with hot air furnaces, water accommodation, and extensive out-buildings, ostensibly for a Lunatic Asylum. A building for the use of lunatics should be constructed expressly for the purpose intended, and no second hand make shift should for one moment be thought of.

As well might we expect the Government to buy up all the old, worn-out buildings in various parts of the country to serve the purpose of Court-house and gaol. A Lunatic Asylum is not a charity. It is an institution as essential to the well ordering of society as is a Gaol. Many, we might say the majority of cases of insanity are superinduced by evil habits, indulged in possibly for years. The unfortunate victims, in many instances, become so enslaved by the particular vice, as to lose all moral power of self-restraint, and the result is in the end, if not death, destruction, or it may be only temporary disturbance of the powers of the mind. Such is undoubtedly the case with the habitual drunkard—a state well recognized in the present day as one of mental derangement, and one which society is bound, for its own security, to endeavour to arrest by all legal and benevolent means. Cases daily accumulate in which the most wretched crimes have been perpetrated under temporary insanity through drink; and, on the other hand, abundant evidence is obtainable of the permanent benefit to habitual drunkards of isolation and appropriate treatment. How far society is answerable for the neglect of these wretched beings we are not prepared to argue, but unquestionably it