

treatment. Even supposing that there had been no principles perfectly settled, it would have been better to have acted on doubtful ones as if they had been certain, and so to have tested and verified, or finally rejected them, than to have abandoned all rule and permitted what is certainly destructive. But there are some principles or rules which are perfectly well settled, and it is also well settled that these rules cannot be disregarded without increasing the rate of mortality, and the duration and cost of treatment, and proportionately diminishing the capabilities of the institutions; and if there are such principles, it may be a question whether institutions of this kind ought to be permitted to exist except on the condition of their observance. Institutions of pure benevolence require regulation and supervision; much more do establishments maintained, as are some of these, merely as the cheapest mode of getting rid of a social obligation.

For the rest, the defects as stated in the accounts of the several institutions (Part IV) must plead for themselves.

PART III.—GENERAL SUGGESTIONS.

48. It is evident that the objects desired in the treatment of the diseased in curative hospitals and asylums are, that the greatest possible proportion of patients should be cured and in the shortest possible time, to which must be added in the case of asylums that the normal condition and rights of the insane should be infringed upon in as small a degree as may be consistent with efficient management. It is not justifiable to rest satisfied with a less number of cures than the disease reasonably admits of, or with a system which permits any unnecessary restraint.

Objects desired in the management of hospitals and asylums.

The means to these ends are of three kinds,—material condition and resources, provisions for the management and application of those resources, and guarantees for such proper management and application; and, setting aside the question of whether in each case sufficient funds are provided, a matter which must here be taken for granted and cannot be made the subject of any general recommendation, three cardinal conditions may be selected which it is necessary to secure, (and which being secured all minor improvements will follow almost as of course), and which are fit subjects for general measures. These are—

- (1.) The primary condition of sanitary efficiency.
- (2.) That the administrative and executive powers should be vested where they will be most effectively and responsibly exercised. And
- (3.) That there should be ready and certain means of testing and verifying the good working of every part of the machinery.

These three points are by far the most generally important. Several minor measures are suggested by the revealed condition of the institutions and by the reports of experienced authorities in this country and in the colonies, and may, perhaps, be properly pressed on the local administrators by way of suggestion and advice.

49. The first condition to be considered is that of sanitary efficiency. For all defects in this kind, taking into account the prevailing ignorance, or the disregard of what is known, there seems to be but one remedy which would be certain or continuing in its operation, namely, the introduction into the several colonial Legislatures of bills to regulate the construction and sanitary state of hospitals and asylums.

Sanitary Act.

It is difficult to see in what way such a bill could be resisted unless its provisions were extravagant. The class for whom such institutions are intended, if they are treated at all, have a strong claim to be treated according to the conditions which scientific experience has found to be indispensable.

But as the poorer colonies (whose institutions are often the worst) could