

COTTAGE SYSTEM.

So much has appeared in the popular periodicals from time to time, in reference to, and generally in praise of, the "free-air life" and the "colonisation" of the insane at Gheel, in Belgium, that many have been disposed to advocate the grouping together of patients of this class in cottages, rather than immuring them in large establishments as is now done. At Gheel, "a whole peasant population, spread over a large area, have devoted themselves for ages to the care and treatment of the insane." "Some years ago a commencement of such an undertaking was attempted at Haywards Heath, (England), which in those days was isolated enough, but even there, with the advantages of isolation and close proximity to the parent asylum, it had to be abandoned, as the patients were always full of complaints, and all anxious to return to the asylum."*

At the State Asylum, Worcester, Mass., a system of drafting selected patients into cottages near at hand has been tried and virtually condemned on the score of increased cost of maintenance, and ineffectual supervision.

The advantages claimed for the cottage system are a greater degree of freedom for the inmates, and an approximation to home-life. Except in the case of convalescent patients, as a sort of stepping stone to the outer world, these advantages, as shown above, are more nominal than real. The disadvantages of the system as an adjunct to Hospitals, consist in the difficulty of finding suitable guardians to take charge of the patients in these cottages; in the inconvenience and delay in distributing food and other supplies; in the impracticability of proper supervision over a widely extended area; and further, in the increased cost of management found to be unavoidably associated with these separate and detached buildings. These serious drawbacks have prevented the general adoption of a system which at one time promised to be exceedingly popular. In our case, independently of the objections above named, is the impracticability of giving proper attention to individual cases, if too many patients are committed to the one establishment.

* On over-crowded Lunatic Asylums; by S. W. D. Williams, M. D., *Journal of Mental Science*, January, 1872.

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