

results with the percentage of cures obtained in the Ontario asylums. Here we find the percentage of cures to be: Toronto 42.74, London 39.50, Kingston 35.51, Hamilton 29.20; average 35.40. These figures do not look as if Quebec asylums were up to the highest mark of efficiency attained in any country. It may be that the proportion of incurable cases is greater in Quebec than in Ontario; but making every allowance for a difference in this respect, it would surely not account for the difference in results. It is too wide to be explained by any thing that does not take into account difference of management; and if in the conduct of these institutions we must seek for a large part of the difference in results, it is impossible not to conclude that there is at least the same room for improvement in Quebec asylums that there is admitted to be in Quebec prisons.

There is just another possible loophole. Of the whole number discharged from all the asylums in the two provinces, only a proportion are cured, some are improved, and others are not even better when they leave than when they entered. As to what constitutes a cure, there may, in some cases, be room for the play of opinion. Are the Quebec medical men more scrupulous in assuming that cures have been effected, when patients are discharged, than those of Ontario? There is no antecedent probability why this should be so, and it would not be safe to assume that it is. There is, however, a test by which this may be tried. If we add to the proportion of cures the number of those who were discharged improved, we find that in Quebec it was 1.41 per cent., while in Ontario it was 1.71. This illustration makes the case of Quebec rather worse than better in the comparison. There is still another test: the proportion of discharged who were unimproved, in Quebec, was 2.13 per cent., while in Ontario it was but three-quarters of one per cent., 0.74. In every possible point of view, and tried by the test of every available comparison, the Quebec lunatic asylums appear to be seriously in want of improvement. It follows that the proportion of discharges, in any condition of the patients, is much lower than in Ontario. We shall not suggest or insinuate that the plan of payment per head in any way tends to increase the detentions. Still the fact of a greater proportion of detentions requires to be explained, like many other things connected with these institutions. If we may, in any respect, judge the work by the results, the management of the Quebec asylums must be pronounced a failure.

We are quite aware of the undue tendency to call upon the Government to do things which can be done quite as well, and even better, by private effort; it is a tendency from which only mischief can be expected. We incline to the opinion, however, that the management of lunatics is an exception, and that on the whole it has been better done by the State than it used to be, or is now done by private persons. Not that this is universally true or true of all countries. It is unfortunate, perhaps, that this should be so, in those instances in which it does occur, because anything that

tends to call in the authority of the Government to do what can be done by individuals, even where the Government, as seldom happens, for the moment does it best, because the fact is urged as a reason why the Government should undertake a great many other things for which it has really neither aptitude nor mission. Private asylums of unexceptionable character are numerous in Europe, and they are not unknown here. The real trouble about asylums is the pauper element; people who are able to pay for their friends can generally see that they are properly treated in private institutions. Non-paying patients must be a charge on the public, in some form, and generally they go into State asylums. In the absence of any other provision, this is necessary, and the institution once in existence, attracts pay patients. The time may come when the separation in the two classes of patients, between private and public asylums, will be made; for there is not any insuperable reason why patients should not fare as well in a private asylum, subject to official inspection, as in one controlled by the State.

MEASUREMENT OF MOLASSES.

Merchants in St. John made a complaint, a month or two ago, that there was something irregular about the gauging of molasses packages at other ports, notably St. Stephen and Yarmouth, which gave the importers at these places an undue advantage over those who landed their importations at the capital. Like complaints had been made in 1886, and the alleged evil had not been remedied entirely in the interval. "The primitive method of gauging in use at St. Stephen" was blamed by the *St. John Sun* for the discrepancies. Government officials from Halifax being sent to look into matters, they found that Yarmouth measuring made in many cases four gallons to the puncheon over the correct gauge, while in St. John the measure was from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 gallons under the proper gauge. The significance of this is apparent. It meant a difference of \$1.50 a hogshead between molasses gauged at Yarmouth and that gauged at St. John. It also made a difference of about fifteen cents to the vessel in the matter of freight.

Taking the difference to the wholesale dealers to be 50 cents, at St. John, the effect will be apparent by instancing the case of the two cargoes recently received by Turnbull & Co., making about 700 hogsheads. With an accurate gauge, the firm will be in a better position by \$350 with the two cargoes than under the old system.

As to the other ports, the gauging at St. Stephen was found to be about right as regards the measure of the cask, but there was something wrong about the system of measuring the "outs," which would perhaps make a difference of a gallon in some cases. The gauging at Annapolis is the same as at Yarmouth, or four gallons over the correct measurement.

It is a matter eminently satisfactory to St. Stephen, which port is vigorously championed by the *St. Croix Courier*, to find that the measurement of her officials has

been in the main sustained by superior examination. But there should be no such difference of results possible as is here complained of. A uniform standard and method of gauging ought to give the same result, whether in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick. The injustice wrought by unskilful measurement is not confined to the importer. His customer buys a cask of molasses for the same money as the man pays who gets the liberal survey, but the other man sells 84 gallons, and he can only sell 80. The injury is felt by the retailer, who buys from the favored dealer. He pays for 84 gallons of molasses and gets only 80 gallons. The circle of iniquity is thus completed. It is no defence to say that 5 per cent. difference is not worth bothering about. Defective methods that work injustice are not to be defended; and it is to be hoped that the investigation has resulted in settling this grievance.

FIRE PREVENTION OR EXTINGUISHING.

Among the topics discussed by the fire engineers of the United States at their convention in Detroit last week, were some that are of practical moment to firemen and underwriters everywhere. When a hundred or more fire-fighters come together from places thousands of miles apart, used to combat the fire-fiend in different climates and under widely varying circumstances, what they have to say upon the topics of common interest is likely to be of an experimental rather than of a theoretical character. Still it is evident from the discussions at Detroit that certain of the speakers had given some attention to chemistry, and had likewise looked at their occupation from an economic, not to say legal, point.

The handling of fires in their early stages was the topic introduced by the fire chief of St. Louis, Mr. Lindsay, and he could not have been too earnest in impressing the view that the first minutes, nay, seconds, in the course of a fire are of the most vital importance. He tells us, indeed, that it is yearly becoming more difficult to cope with fires in their early stages, and urges forcibly that great essential, promptness of alarm. Laws should be framed, he declares, that will tend to lessen the fire loss. This is precisely what has been urged in these columns again and again; and only the other day the fire ordinances of Atlanta, Georgia, were cited as specimens of desirable steps in this direction. In contending with a fire two great essentials are, says Mr. Lindsay, first-class equipment and a cool, prompt, energetic man in charge, who has the confidence of his brigade. The captain should observe the plan of the burning building, and the direction which the fire is taking. To keep communication open with the engine, and to see that the building is well ventilated, are important precautions. Basement fires he finds the most difficult to fight. A statement which was loudly applauded by his audience was to the effect that little dependence is to be placed upon private apparatus for the extinguishment of fires, "because they are generally out of order, and almost always