

overcrowding for which they were not responsible, by adding to their old establishment new buildings, and thus doubling the size of the Asylum within the past three years. They have spared neither trouble nor the means at their disposal, to improve the condition of the patients intrusted to their care, and to render their establishment useful and comfortable. At the present moment, though there are some six hundred patients in the two Asylums, there is abundant room for one hundred and fifty additional patients.

It is hardly necessary to tell you that most of our insane patients belong to the poorer class, and that a great many of those who come to us from the Gaols are clothed in worn-out rags; and that in many cases, in fact, they are handed over to us in a state of complete nakedness, for the officer under whose charge they are brought to the Asylum, is instructed to take back the clothing of the patient as the property of the Gaol. When these patients leave the Asylum they take away the clothing furnished them by us.

We take the liberty of calling your attention to the fact that patients who are sent to us from the Gaols very rarely furnish us with the information solicited, by questions contained in a formula to be sent with in each patient. In most cases we merely have the name of the patient entered in the order, and no other information whatever of a nature to enlighten us as to his antecedents. It is desirable that the Gaolers should be ordered to answer,—themselves, or through the physicians attached to the Gaols,—in a more explicit manner, the questions thus addressed to them. In most cases the officers accompanying the patients know nothing of their history. Whenever, which is very seldom, any documents are sent with the insane, they refer only to his conduct while in prison, and say nothing as to his life prior to imprisonment. The probable cause of madness, the duration of the latter prior to admission, the indication of hereditary predisposition, or the succinct history of the patient's family and habits, the coercive measures which may have been adopted in the family, &c. :—all this is completely wanting. And, nevertheless, institutions of this kind are expected to be in a position to furnish statistics of a nature to shew the development and progress of insanity in the country; the number of persons affected in proportion to the population; what classes in society are most frequently attacked; the influence exercised by social position, civil status, certain trades, hereditary influences, education; the various proximate causes of disease, the results of treatment, the proportionate number of discharges and deaths, the various causes of death and the pathological changes observed after death. Nevertheless, these statistics should be based on positive evidence only. To write the history of insanity with materials uncertain and incomplete as these before us, would place us in no enviable position. Such a history would be, not a history, but a romance, a record of the vagaries of wayward fancy, not of truth and in itself an act of reprehensible folly.

We cannot omit to comment on a fact which is much to be deplored—a fact which constantly comes under our notice. We mean the detention of a large number of persons who, being deprived of reason, are left to mope in Gaols for whole months, nay, sometimes for years, instead of sending them at once to an Asylum where mental diseases are subjected to treatment. They are then deprived of all chance of restoration. Such a system cannot fail to increase the number of incurables now crowding our Asylums. Greater vigilance and zeal would lead to the adoption of measures, which, early applied, while a cure is still possible, might lead to recovery. Such measures, far from increasing the cost of their maintenance or of their removal to an Asylum, would have the contrary effect. In both cases, the patients are chargeable to the state, but in one case the subject becomes incurable, while in the other he recovers and is restored to society. We admit the necessity of restraint in person, as for instance, when a poor wretch is found in the public way, unfit to take care of himself, and abandoned by his friends. To shelter such an unfortunate even within the walls of a prison is, in such circumstances, an act of humanity, but it is hard to believe that so much time is needed to make sure of insanity and to send the person to an Asylum where he would receive at once the attention required. Mental disorders occasionally pass through their several phases with astonishing rapidity; and that stage during which the disease is still capable of cure is often very short. Is it not greatly to be deplored, that this should elapse without any attempt being made to afford the wretched prisoner the means of restoration, wanting which he becomes a mere machine, an object of compassion to all who look upon him. These remarks applied to prisons, are equally applicable to families; but with respect to them—as to an inviolable sanctuary, we