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# THE CANADA MEDICAL RECORD

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## THE PROTESTANT INSANE ASYLUM.

For some months public attention has been prominently directed to the working of the Lunacy Regulations in this Province. So much dissatisfaction has been expressed with the existing order of things that an active movement has been started by some of our prominent citizens to establish an asylum for the Protestant insane, somewhere in the vicinity of Montreal. It is unfortunate, however, that the question has been allowed to assume such narrow limits, when the wider and more important subject of the treatment and management of the insane in general in this Province needs such careful and earnest consideration. In this, as in many other respects, the Province of Quebec is half a century behind the times; such institutions as Beauport and Long Point asylums might have passed muster fifty years ago, now they are simply a disgrace to the intelligence of the Province and the capacity of its legislators. Asylums for the insane are no longer regarded by intelligent communities merely as prisons for the restraint of dangerous lunatics, but as special hospitals for the treatment of certain forms of brain-disease which are amenable to early and judicious treatment in a large percentage of cases. Public opinion in Great Britain has revolutionized insane asylums there; the Bedlams of olden times with all their horrors have been swept away; cruelty and violence have been replaced by kindness and gentleness; and to-day, in many of the largest asylums, locks and bolts, straight jackets and padded rooms are unknown. In the United States and Ontario similar

improvements are being rapidly made. In Great Britain, the United States and Ontario, the large asylums are supported by Government, the most accomplished alienists placed in charge, and every facility afforded for the proper treatment and management of patients; while, at the same time, government inspection is thorough, and the management always open to public and professional criticism.

Now how do we manage things in the Province of Quebec? At Long Point the Government farms out its lunatics to a community of nuns, at so much per head per annum! There is no competent resident Medical Superintendent to receive, classify and discharge patients, and to prescribe, direct and supervise their treatment. The Government Visiting Physician admits and discharges patients and looks after the hygienic conditions of the place, but he does not reside in the institution, nor has he any power or authority as regards treatment. A medical staff consisting of a superintendent and three assistants would scarcely do justice to the patients now confined in Long Point Asylum. The institution may be a model of neatness, and the sisters may be kindness itself to those under their care, but that does not justify the system. Under present arrangements Long Point is chiefly used as a place of restraint, and fails utterly in fulfilling its more important function—judicious medical treatment. Beauport is in a somewhat similar condition.

Seeing the utter inadequacy and inefficiency of the present system, several philanthropic Protestants have bestirred themselves to find a remedy, and are now proposing to establish an asylum for the Protestant insane, conducted upon a rational basis and securing for its patients the advantages of modern improved methods. All honor to these kind-hearted men for their good intentions; but are they not on the wrong track? It would not only be a very costly undertaking to secure a proper site and erect suitable buildings, but far more costly to run it efficiently afterwards. Being a strictly sectional institution, it would depend for its support upon the liberality of the Protestant public,—a liberality strained to the utmost by the numerous charitable schemes now in existence. If, after a time, enthusiasm declined and subscriptions fell off, expenditure would require to be cut down, probably by diminishing the staff or by replacing assistants who are expensive but efficient,