would be a distinct interval of absolute unconsciousness; if he had been speaking instead of playing cards, this interval would have been exactly the "paralysis of ideas" described by Dr. Winslow. Within a few months afterwards, I was examined as a medical witness, on a commission of lunacy, taken out against this very gentleman, who within two years died of general paralysis in an asylum near London. A late physician attached to St. George's Hospital, suffered under the same species of epileptiform attacks for many years before his death, although they did not for a long time prevent his continuing the practice of his profession. Such seizures are not necessarily connected with general paralysis, although they are so frequently concomitant with it. The attack constituting the *petit mal* of the French divisions of epilepsy and a still slighter form of this same affection, for the recognition of whose true nature, I am indebted I believe, to a very distinguished practical physician, Dr. Browne, one of the commissioners in lunacy for Scotland, may be noticed in some cases of general paralysis. In these the final words of sentences are cut off, not from muscular inability, as they often also are, but from a kind of epileptic spasm, that cogs for a brief moment the intellectual machine. "Some epileptic patients," says Esquirol, "present only a simple convulsive movement of a limb, or of the head or lips, or a general shivering, followed by rigidity; sometimes have only a SENSATION AS OF BEING STUNNED, WITH A MOMENTARY DEPRIVATION OF THOUGHT." This symptom, then, is something far more than a disorder of "attention," it marks very grave disease, and is the index symptom either of general paralysis, or of some other most serious derangement of the central organ of the intellect.

Observations on the Size and Construction of Lunatic Asylums. By JOSEPH LALOR, M.D., Resident Physician of the Richmond District Lunatic Asylum, Dublin.

It is only after much thinking, and with much hesitation, that I venture to advocate in the following pages, principles as to the size and construction of lunatic asylums, which I believe to be at variance with those upheld by the highest

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.7.35.104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

authorities on this subject; but the question how provision may be best made for the enormous number of lunatics now known to exist in every civilized country, is one of such importance, and still so far from having received a satisfactory answer, that it seems a matter of duty on the part of every one who has had favourable opportunities for considering the matter, to place his views before the public. In this, as in other questions, full and free discussion seems to offer the best chance for a speedy arrival at the truth, and though my views may not meet public approval, yet their publication may contribute to enquiry, and thus tend to a satisfactory solution of the question. I am of opinion, that asylums of large size are the best adapted for the curative and humane treatment of the insane, and whilst I am not prepared to say what limit should be put to the size of an asylum, I do not consider that Colney Hatch, which is the largest of our public asylums, would be too large, if its internal construction had been arranged so as to meet certain modifications in the principles of management, which, in my mind, would be advisable in all asylums, but which are still more requisite in those of large than of small size.

Amongst the earlier principles which regulated the systematic treatment of the insane in lunatic asylums was this: that the influence of the moral governor, as the chief resident officer of these institutions was frequently called, should be brought to bear constantly on each case individually, so as, that he might daily give to each of the patients such personal advice and instruction as seemed best calculated to subvert existing delusions or immoral propensities, and to instil sounder notions. Whether intentionally or not, the same principles appear to have been adopted in the so-called moral treatment of the insane, as prevailed at the same period in the education of the sane classes; and I think there are strong reasons for being guided by the same principles in the one case as in the other; but whilst improvements in the principles of education have led to a considerable diminution in the amount of individual teaching amongst the sane classes, the exploded principle is still sought to be maintained amongst the insane for no good reason that I am aware of.

Public boards have been induced by considerations of economy to prefer the erection of large to small asylums, and this preference increases in proportion as the demand for asylum accommodation makes the cost of erection and maintenance of those institutions an object of greater solicitude to the guardians of the public purse. Nor should those benevolent

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.7.35.104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

persons who look to the proper treatment of the insane as their primary care overlook the matter of economy, seeing that the question of expense so largely influences the judgment of public authorities, as to whether lunatics shall be left at large totally uncared for, or kept in workhouses with such insufficient care as workhouses are known to afford to the insane, or have special asylums properly built and properly maintained appropriated to their own use. But in my mind large asylums are not only the most economic, but what is of still greater importance, they can be made to present superior domestic arrangements, a superior class of officers, and the means of amusement, of employment, and of instruction, in much greater abundance, variety, and perfection than small asylums. The greater the number of inmates the greater will be the number who may be made the means of contributing to the comfort, the instruction, or the amusement of their fellow inmates, either by their knowledge of some trade, or the possession of some accomplishment, as music or singing; musical bands, theatrical performances, gymnastic and military exercises, and out of door games, are more easily organised, and when organized present a larger number to share their benefits as listeners or lookers on in large than in small asylums. So also lectures, teaching by classes, and above all the influence of the example of the large mass of the quiet and orderly, on their more disorderly fellow inmates will be more powerful and more available instruments of good in large than in small asylums. In instructing sane adult classes, whether in morality, in science, or in literature, the advantages of teaching in class, or in masses, become every day more fully appreciated and established. Singing, music, and amusements for the million, are every day more called for by the public voice, and the opinion I believe is gaining ground that religious instruction carries more influence when addressed to large masses than to smaller congregations. What reason is there for supposing that those powerful. mental, and moral levers should not be applied on the same principles to the insane as to the sane mind? Viewing the question thus, it appears to me that large are preferable to small asylums, no less on scientific principles, and from benevolent considerations, than from motives of economy.

Along with the principle of individual teaching of the insane has descended a classification generally threefold, according as the insane are considered to be refractory, quiet, or convalescent. The haphazard mode by which this latter principle was arrived at is evident from this, that the proportion in which

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.7.35.104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

accommodation was provided for each of these classes seems generally to have been determined by dividing the entire number for which asylum accommodation was provided, first, by two for the sexes, then the number of each sex by three, making an arbitrary numerical equalization of the refractory, quiet, and convalescent classes, which every one at all acquainted with the subject, knows to be contrary to the real proportion. In some of the earlier built asylums single sleeping cells were provided for all the patients, so little was it thought that many of them might be associated in dormitories not only with safety, but as is now known advantageously. Subsequently when associated dormitories were introduced, the proportion of cells for the different classes seems to have been determined rather capriciously than on any fixed principle, and even at the present day, perhaps on no point is there such contrariety of opinion. I believe that the opinion is gaining ground more and more every day, that single cells are not required by any means in large proportion; and the day may not be distant when it may be considered that they can be advantageously dispensed with altogether. The usual sizes for public asylums, as regulated by the supposed requirement of the district for which they were built, were for 100, 150, and 250; and the division of those entire numbers on the principles above indicated, gave about 25 or 40 as the usual number in each class. The want of reliable statistics for scientific determination of such questions seems to have necessitated such haphazard arrangements, and the proportion which the orderly bear to the disorderly amongst the insane is so largely affected by the circumstance whether the asylum accommodation be provided for the insane generally of a district, or only for those cases deemed the most urgent objects, either as regards curability, or their own or the public safety, that the question of classification must be viewed from an entirely different aspect in the one case from what it is in the other. Considerations of this kind seem, however, not to have had proper weight when lunatic asylums came to be enlarged to hold 300, 500, 1,000, or as in Colney Hatch nearly 2,000; and no better principle seems to have been adopted in the construction of large new asylums, or in the enlargement of old ones, than making them multiples in all their parts of existing structures. Thus an asylum for 500 was constructed as an asylum for 250 had been, in divisions of about 40, making 12 divisions, or in other words, 12 different asylums under one roof. The inconveniences, the complications, the disadvantages, and the difficulties of management which have resulted

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.7.35.104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

from the want of scientific principles in providing large asylums, are generally attributed solely to the fact of the large size of those institutions, owing to that very usual, though not very logical process of reasoning—*post hoc ergo propter hoc.*

I shall endeavour to select some of what I believe to be the most important of the objectionable points in large asylums, and I hope to be able to shew that they are not attributable to this cause.

First. The difficulty of general supervision is plainly attributable more to the subdivision of asylums than to their large size.

The introduction of large dining halls has made it much easier to have the very important matter of the due distribution of food to 500 patients superintended personally by the head of the establishment, than it was formerly in an asylum of 150 with six refectories separated from each other by considerable distances; the introduction of large recreation halls and of large dormitories, has produced a result of an analogous nature as regards the sleeping accommodation and in-door amusements of the insane, and the association of large masses of insane people far from producing the result dreaded by some, of general turbulence and confusion, is found to be highly conducive to good order and quietude. It only remains to introduce large work-rooms and school-rooms, and the corresponding substitution of class teaching for individual instruction, on principles identical with those which have so favourably reformed our educational system for the sane classes, to make the general superintendence of a large asylum, say for 2000, about as easy for one head, as such superintendence was formerly in an asylum for 250, with its many arbitrary and complicated subdivisions. Of course a due staff of subordinate officers should be allowed also.

A lunatic asylum, whether large or small, should, I think, be conducted, so far as moral training is concerned, on the same principles as a school, chiefly of an industrial character; and the first step towards a correct system should be the abolition of the present mode of subdividing lunatic asylums by which each division is made, as it were, a house in itself. The very faulty arrangement of having the sleeping and day apartments mixed up together, and too frequently of having one room of quite insufficient size as a refectory and work room, equally requires correction. To keep apartments so arranged in wholesome condition and good order even for a few hours in the day, requires truly an amount of watchfulness,

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.7.35.104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

supervision, and labour, which makes the proper superintendence of a large asylum, so constructed and managed, by a single superintendent, a plain matter of impossibility at any time. But there are periods of the day when the patients rise, and make up their sleeping rooms; and, again, when they are preparing their rooms to go to bed, when no amount of supervision by any number of officers, can prevent an unwholesomeness and offensiveness of atmosphere, and an indecorum of appeanance highly injurious in their moral effects on the patients.

The maintenance of a refractory class, whose ordinary condition is one of permanent isolation from their more quiet fellow inmates, is, in my mind, open to many very obvious theoretical objections, and in practice I think I have observed that its general effect is injurious.

The dread of physical or moral injury to the quiet and convalescent classes, by the mixture of the so-called refractory, can at the most justify their separation only during the continuance of refractory excitement. No patient that I have ever seen is at all times violent; and it appears reasonable to allow even to the more refractory the solace and the advantage of association with the more orderly inmates, in those intervals of freedom from excitement, which are to be met with even in the worst cases.

The entire want of intellect, and the not unusual accompaniment of filthy or disgusting habits, have been also not unfrequently made the grounds of separation.

But the successful establishment of idiot asylums with classes associated for amusement, for instruction, and for domestic and industrial pursuits, and the beneficial results of such association, have abundantly proved the false principles which led to such unnatural, as well as unscientific, classifications. Even amongst criminals, who of all others might be supposed the most likely to be contaminated by association, the teaching of industrial pursuits, and the communication of literary instruction in classes, is found to produce good results. An asylum constructed so as to meet the requirements of such a system of management or education as that of which I have given a very imperfect outline, in addition to one general dining-hall, which might also serve as a recreation hall, according to occasion, should have general large workrooms and large dormitories, and the day rooms should be on the basement story, and open into gardens. With such architectural arrangements, and such a system of management, those difficulties would disappear, the presence of which in

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.7.35.104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

large asylums differently constructed, and of necessity differently managed, has led to the erroneous opinion, as I believe, of the superiority of small asylums, with a view to cure or humane treatment.

The construction of asylums which I advocate would, in my mind, render undue restraint so difficult, and so easy of detection, as to be a most powerful auxiliary to its repression. Restraint and harsh treatment, so easy to practice, and so difficult to detect in an asylum which is a complicated network of long and puzzling corridors, and of small rooms or single cells, could not escape observation in those immense halls where large masses of patients in association would be exposed to the notice of each other, of numerous attendants, and of every passing officer and visitor, assembled as the inmates would be on the most accessible floor, and in the most central positions. Thus also could the best aspect and prospect be most easily obtained, for the rooms which would be occupied by the patients during the day, no matter what might be the size or shape of the asylum, and there would be no longer occasion for keeping patients all day in rooms with a northern aspect, or looking out in confined yards or dead walls, as all such apartments might be left for sleeping rooms. The principles of association in the treatment of the insane have been already partially tested with a favourable result by others, as well as by myself, so far as dining and recreation halls, and dormitories; and I have also to a certain extent tested them in out-of-door associated labour amongst the male lunatics, and indoor needle work amongst female lunatics. At the present moment rooms of a large size are approaching completion in this asylum, which will afford me a better opportunity than I have ever heretofore had of testing the principle of association at work or in instruction amongst female lunatics, and I shall endeavour to turn this opportunity to the best advantage. I should have preferred to defer my observations on the present subject until I could have given the results of my further experience, if it did not appear to me on my late visit to England, that the question of the size of asylums was not considered there as much as appears to me desirable in connexion with those new principles of treatment which have been partially developed in the construction of large dining and recreation halls and refectories, and that it might therefore be attended with some advantage at once, to submit the two subjects for consideration in connexion with one another. It has also been usual to rest the advantages of large asylums entirely on economic grounds, and it may not be without its use to shew that there are higher reasons

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.7.35.104 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for preferring them. If such a happy combination of science, benevolence, and economy, can by any means be effected as to lead to a provision for all our insane in suitable asylums, and with a suitable system of treatment and management, a consummation will be arrived at, at which I believe all true philanthropists would rejoice. If the foregoing remarks may contribute in the least degree to such a result, it will be to me a source of the highest gratification. I know they explain very imperfectly a few of the principles on which large asylums may be considered as best suited to the treatment of the insane, whether we look to cure, or to merely humane considerations. The entire subject is one of immense extent and importance, and requires elucidation from some abler hand than mine; but if I obtain for it in the meantime the favour of its being considered an open question, I think I shall have done some good.

The Fourteenth Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy, to the Lord Chancellor. Ordered by the House of Commons to be Printed, 25th May, 1860.

The first part of this report is occupied with the description of the additions made during the past year to the accommodation made in asylums for pauper lunatics, either by the opening of new asylums, or by the enlarging of old ones. The new asylum for the united counties of Bedfordshire, Herts, and Hants, built for 500 patients, at an estimated cost of £65,000, is nearly complete. At the Chester Asylum additional accommodation has been provided in a manner which appears to have given the commissioners great satisfaction, namely, by two new wings, copied from the new building recently erected at the Devon Asylum. These new wings, with accommodation for 217 patients, have cost only £7,733 5s. 4d., or, about £36 a head. Mr. Brushfield, the superintendent of the asylum, has furnished the commissioners with six lithograph plans of these new buildings; which, together with a concise description, the commissioners have published in their appendix. The new male building is quite detached, but the female touches the old asylum by one corner. We sincerely hope to see this plan so strongly recommended by the commissioners, adopted wherever a moderate degree of

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.7.35.104 Published online by Cambridge University Press