Attendants in asylums follow their calling for the sake of earning an honest livelihood just as any other class of men and women do; their duties are onerous, their hours of duty long, and their responsibilities great; they are subject to insults, to taunts, to mis-representations, to violence; they can achieve no glory by faithfully performing their duties, their kindest acts and intentions are often misconstrued, they are liable to instant dismissal, and even to prosecution if they are guilty of violence, under no matter what provocation, and they receive about the same rate of remuneration as domestic servants; for this they are required to return good words for evil, gentleness for violence, and kindness for the most cutting taunts and insults.

It should be borne in mind that madness recruits its most numerous victims not from the temperate, the order-loving, and the law-abiding classes of society (though these are to be found among the number); that mental disease generally has the effect of developing the bad qualities and repressing the good by lessening the power of self-restraint; that constant association with persons of degraded mental faculties exercise a deteriorating influence on those who are submitted to it; and that medical superintendents of asylums have no special opportunities of securing the services of persons who have a more just appreciation of the principles of the Christian religion, who are more imbued with the "Enthusiasm of Humanity," than are to be found in the ordinary walks of life; but, notwithstanding, I confidently believe that a large proportion of asylum attendants perform their duties with a conscientiousness, and a singleness of purpose that would do credit to any class of the community; and the kind expressions towards attendants contained in the numerous letters that I receive from discharged patients is evidence at least as worthy of credit as any statement made by "ex-attendants" who have probably themselves been dismissed from their situations for misconduct.

But whilst taking a favourable view of the character and conduct of attendants generally, I consider that the supervision over them should be most vigilant, and this as much for the benefit of the painstaking and conscientious, whose merits will thus be better appreciated, as for the indolent and indifferent, who will thereby be stimulated to greater exertions.

Hydrate of Chloral.

Among the various contributions which are appearing on all sides upon the value of the hydrate of chloral, we may quote the opinion of the able superintendent of the Devon Asylum. Dr. Saunders says:—

"In the remedial treatment of the class of diseases which come under the care of the Asylum physician, no medicine deserves a fuller trial than the chloral hydrate which was first introduced to the notice

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.16.74.255 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of the profession by MM. Liebreich and Dumas, on the continent; and in England the attention of medical practitioners was attracted to this little known substance by the report of Dr. Richardson, made to the Association for the Advancement of Science, at the meeting held in Exeter last August. Since then its merits have been freely and fairly tested in this Asylum, and chloral has proved a therapeutic agent of great value. As a hypnotic, it deservedly ranks with opium, and often procures refreshing sleep when the latter remedy has failed. A passing notice can only here be made of the class of cases in which this remedy has been used. Its results have been most satisfactory in mania, especially of the recurrent form with absence of sleep, and restlessness. Patients who have passed sleepless nights, in spite of the ordinary treatment by morphia, henbane, etc., have, after a two scruple or drachm dose of the chloral hydrate, passed a tranquil night, and had undisturbed rest, lasting from six to twelve hours. In recurrent suicidal melancholia, with excitement, it has proved equally valuable, as was shown in the case of a man recently under treatment, who suddenly became noisy, and in an excited tone carried on an imaginary conversation with the devil, who was tempting him to dash his brains out, and upbraided him for his cowardice in not at once doing so. A drachm dose of chloral was prescribed, and in twenty minutes he fell into a sound sleep, from which he awoke much refreshed both in mind and body. On the second day after the attack he was pursuing his employment in his usual state of health. He had several previous attacks, which yielded to treatment by other remedies, but the prompt action of the drug in this instance was very marked. It has also been used successfully in puerperal mania. In the maniacal excitement of epileptics it has been found to exert a calmative influence. The remedy is of great service in allaying the restless excitement, with destructiveness and dirty habits, so often associated with general paralysis. In a case of neuralgia of the face, recently under treatment, the patient had tried various remedies without effect, but was at once relieved of intense pain by a dose of chloral. One great advantage that this remedy appears to possess is that its administration is not followed by headache, loss of appetite, or sickness, neither does it diminish the secretions. It may on this account be found a valuable soothing agent in the excitement so frequently associated with phthisis and bronchial affections, where the use of opium is objectionable."

If the superintendents of our asylums would carefully record their experience of this drug, in accordance with the scheme of the Report published in this number of the Journal, we should be able to collect a mass of evidence on its use, and on the cases in which it is or is not serviceable, which would be of the very highest importance to all who have to treat the insane. The contributions to the various journals upon the subject are so numerous that space forbids us to reproduce

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.16.74.255 Published online by Cambridge University Press

them here. In "The Lancet," March 26th, Dr. J. Batty Tuke, of the Fife Asylum, gives an account of the cases treated by this drug; and in the "British Medical Journal," May 7th, Dr. Clouston relates his experience of it. We would remind our readers that the price of it now is only 1s. 6d. per oz. It has been stated in "The Lancet," April 30th, by Messrs. Howe, of Aldermanbury, that there is an article manufactured and sold as the hydrate which is not a pure *hydrate*, and has been described as an *alcoholate*, giving off a very obnoxious odour. It is most important that we should obtain pure samples of a drug which is put on its trial as hydrate of chloral is at present.

Insanity in Wilts.

Dr. Thurnam, in his Report, tells us that comparing the Commissioners' "Returns of Pauper Lunatics" with the Returns of Population for 1861, it will be found that Wiltshire stands in the unenviable position of having a greater proportion of insane paupers than any other county of England and Wales. Those most nearly approaching it are Gloucester, Oxford, Berks, and Dorset, all agricultural counties; while the ratio of pauper insanity is lowest in Durham, Glamorgan, Stafford, Yorkshire, Cornwall, Derby, Chester, and Lancashire, the most influential in the mining, manufacturing and trading enterprise of the kingdom.

"There can, in any case, be little doubt that the efficient cause of the large relative amount of insanity in Wiltshire and some of the adjoining counties, is to be found in the emigration of many of the more able-bodied and energetic of the labouring population; who from time to time leave their homes for Glamorganshire and other counties of England and Wales; or who cross the seas to the United States and to the Colonies, in search of higher wages than they can earn at home. Wiltshire is remarkable among the counties of England for its decreasing population; there being only two others (Cambridge and Rutland) in which there was any noticeable decrease in 1861 as compared with 1851. The decrease in Wiltshire was at the rate of about twenty in the thousand, or 2 per cent. in the ten years."

But there are other causes also.

"Dr. Bacon, of the Cambridge Asylum, has recently pointed out 'the close relationship of poverty to the rate of insanity;' and states that in those counties in which there are the most

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