

ever-turning wheel; and all the little healthy spring and play of mind, which it is so necessary to foster in the lunatic, is hopelessly crushed out of him. The triumph of machinery is indeed great in such establishments. After having witnessed the steam-cooking, the steam-washings, and the scores of other plans calculated to lessen human labour, which are indeed indispensable in such vast establishments, we are inclined to ask, What is the result to the patient?—Vacuity!

It is impossible to go through the wards of any large asylum without feeling that scores of inmates who are seen lounging about and dropping into hopeless dementia for want of employment *which immediately interests themselves*, could be rendered useful and contented under the free air system. Dr. Bucknill has happily remarked, that it would be far better for the lunatics to cook and wash for themselves than that these offices should be performed for them; and the same enlightened physician has announced an approach to the Gheel cottage system by causing detached houses, of an inexpensive character, to be erected in the immediate neighbourhood of the Devon County Asylum. "These cottages", he states, in one of his late reports, "are much preferred to the wards by the patients themselves, and permission to reside in them is much coveted." Thus the first movement towards the free air system has been a success, and we trust speedily to see it followed in all cases where more room is required in extending asylums. The great stumblingblock in the way of any approach to the Gheel system in this country, however, is the want of cottagers trained like the Gheelois to undertake the care of the insane, under the rigid superintendence of a sufficient medical authority. The mere planting of lunatics in detached houses is not enough; what is wanted is to intersperse them among the sane population as at Gheel, where the lunatics stand to the sane, in the ratio of one to ten. The immense advantage of thus supporting the unstable mind, is, in our opinion, one of the great points of the free air system, and one that cannot be acquired until we have trained a peasant population. This difficulty will, however, begin to disappear as soon as the system of building or occupying satellite cottages near overgrown asylums shall have come into fashion, as we feel confident it will. At the present moment, however, the brick and mortar mania is so rampant, and the management of the pauper insane is so hopelessly in the hands of the visiting magistrates, whose only idea of pauper lunatics is that they must be kept under strict discipline, within walls and enclosures similar to those of the workhouse and the jail, whose affairs they have been so long accustomed to administer, that all we hope to do is to scatter the good seed of improvement, and to entreat those medical superintendents of public asylums, who see the errors of the present system, to do all in their power to establish satellite cottages, in order to initiate as much of the free air system as is consistent with existing institutions. As soon as we have made a more extended trial in this direction, we feel convinced that a judicious distribution will take the place of the present unwholesome and unscientific concentration of pauper lunatics, and that we shall have made another great stride in the direction of non-restraint.

As we intend to return to this subject, we shall be glad to elicit the opinions of associates engaged in the superintendence of public lunatic asylums.

THE WEEK.

A TRIAL, in which compensation for damages received on the East Lancashire Railway was demanded, has just taken place at Manchester, in which, we fear, one of our associates was found guilty of a little sharp practice. It appears that one Lawrence Hargreaves, an overlooker at a cotton mill, received an injury whilst in the railway train at Heywood Bridge. This person's wife, having heard of her husband's misfortune, immediately went to the spot, and found that his thigh was broken, and that he was insensible. Whilst the patient was in this condition, Dr. Harrison, the surgeon to this among six railways, appeared—the rest of the story we shall give in the evidence of the various witnesses, beginning with that of Nancy Hargreaves.

"Saw Dr. Harrison come into the room and look at her husband's thigh, and told witness that he would see that her husband was made all right. The doctor took witness into a little room and shut the door, and said, 'They are going to give you £40 and pay the doctor.' She said she should prefer a weekly allowance, but he said that would be too much trouble. Dr. Harrison, after the witness declined his offer, took a piece of paper, or a book, and placed a pen between her husband's fingers, and then lifted his hand to make a mark on the paper, and when he had 'stroked it,' Dr. Harrison and Mr. Smithells left the room for a short time, and then returned with a paper, which Mr. Smithells told the witness to take to Bury, and she would get £40. She took it accordingly, and received the money.—Cross-examined: Her husband was not sensible any part of the day, excepting when he asked her where he was. She thought it a wrong thing for a doctor and another gentleman putting his hand to paper when he was insensible.—John Hargreaves, brother to the plaintiff, went to see him the night of the accident, and found him 'almost ready to die'; and he did nothing all the night but 'mean himself' (groan from his pain). Witness corroborated the statement of the previous witness as to the offer of £40 for compensation. Witness saw Dr. Harrison and Mr. Smithells hold the book and pen to his brother's hand, but he did not see any motion in the hand."

Even supposing that these two witnesses did not speak the truth respecting the insensibility of the husband, it cannot be denied that it was exceedingly indecent on the part of Dr. Harrison to attempt to drive a bargain with a man suffering from a severe accident. How was it possible for the poor fellow to have been able to estimate the damage he had received within an hour of the infliction of the injury? This red hot haste may be considered a sharp thing on 'Change; but it is anything but merciful on the part of an educated man; or anything but just on the part of a surgeon who must have been aware that a fracture of the upper part of the thigh was not unlikely to leave the sufferer a cripple for life. Such, in fact, has proved to be the case; and poor Hargreaves now limps about on an imperfect limb, and will do so for the remainder of his life. Yet the tariff for this severe injury, according to the clever manipulation of Dr. Harrison, was to be only £40! We are glad to find that the jury were more just than the medical man, in that they estimated his injury at £210, in addition to the £40 already received, together with 40s. costs. The most cunning part of this affair, however, is yet to be told. Dr. Harrison, whilst under cross-examination, admitted that he sometimes carried lithographed forms of receipts with him when he visited persons injured on the railroad! This gentleman evidently

does business upon system, and in accordance with the motto, "Strike while the iron is hot."

Since our last, we have received the news that the attempt to lay the Atlantic Electric Cable has proved a total failure. The engineer to the Company, who superintended the "paying out" himself, lays the blame upon a subordinate. After stating that all went well until the 11th, when at 3.45 the cable parted:

"I was," he says, "proceeding to the forepart of the ship when I heard the machine stop; I immediately called out to ease the break and reverse the engine of the ship, but when I reached the spot the cable was broken."

"On examining the machine, which was otherwise in perfect order, I found that the breaks had not been released, and to this or to the handwheel of the break being turned the wrong way may be attributed the stoppage, and the consequent fracture of the cable. When the rate of the wheels grew slower as the ship dropped her stern in the swell, the break should have been eased; this had been done regularly before whenever an unusually sudden descent of the ship temporarily withdrew the pressure from the cable in the sea; but, owing to our entering the deep water the previous morning, and having all hands ready for any emergency that might occur there, the chief part of my staff had been compelled to give in at night through sheer exhaustion, and hence, being shorthanded, I was obliged for the time to leave the machine without, as it proves, sufficient intelligence to control it."

It seems very strange that the cable should have been at any time left in the charge of unskilled labour. We hope, however, that the company will have a lesson by this mischief not to employ such expensive labour for the future as ignorant labour. We are glad to hear, however, that the disaster has happened through a pure accident, and not through any defect in the wire itself, or in the paying-out machinery. The directors have issued the following interesting statement respecting the undertaking, which is doubtless partly prompted by the fact that the shares of the company are at £250 discount:

"Sufficient information has already been obtained to show clearly that the present check to the progress of the work, however mortifying, has been purely the result of an accident, and is in no way due to any obstacle in the form of the cable, nor of any natural difficulty, nor of any experience that will in the future affect in the slightest degree the entire success of the enterprise. The only sudden declivity of any serious magnitude, from 410 fathoms to 1,700 fathoms, had been safely overcome, the beautiful flexibility of the cable having rendered it capable of adapting itself, without strain, to circumstances which would probably have been its ruin had it been more rigidly constructed. The combined influences of the low temperature of the water and the compression of the pores of the insulating medium had practically shown that the action of a telegraphic cable, so far from being impaired, is materially improved by being sunk in deep water. The only difficulty worthy of consideration which remained was to demonstrate the practicability of making the splice in mid-ocean. This was put to experimental test by the engineer in a heavy sea, subsequent to the accident, and before the return home of the ships. The two ends on board the Niagara and Agamemnon were joined together, and the splice let down to the bottom into soundings of 2,000 fathoms, and during a heavy sea. The experiment was perfectly successful, and these and all other circumstances which have been wrought out by the recent expedition have made more and more cheering and certain the prospect of complete success on the next occasion."

The Registrar-General of Births, Deaths, and Marriages, in his return for this week, alludes to the significant fact that diarrhoea has for the last twelve years been on the increase in the metropolis; "for, on referring to the returns for the second or third week of August in 1840-45, it will be seen that the number of cases in which it was fatal was as low as 20 or 11, and did not exceed 70. Besides the deaths from diarrhoea (244), there were 21 last week from 'cholera' and choleraic diarrhoea, 12 of which occurred in young children." This is indeed a noteworthy increase, and the more alarming as it appears to be so steadily going on. It may, we think, be readily accounted for by looking at and smelling the Thames. This stream has been for several summers past disgusting both in colour and odour; and we suppose, that the more we build, and the more perfect is the drainage into the Thames, the worse it will get, until the great intercepting drains are completed. We earnestly hope that great work will be accomplished before cholera springs upon us suddenly, as a tiger springs upon his victim from the jungle.

Association Intelligence.

LETTERS AND COMMUNICATIONS.

Letters or communications for the JOURNAL should be addressed to Dr. WYNTER, Coleherne Court, Old Brompton, S.W.

Letters regarding the business department of the JOURNAL, and corrected proofs, should be sent to 37, Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, W.C.

ADMISSION OF MEMBERS, AND PAYMENT OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

THE General Secretary of the British Medical Association begs to call the attention of members to the Laws regarding the ADMISSION OF MEMBERS, and the PAYMENT of their SUBSCRIPTIONS.

"Admission of Members. Any qualified medical practitioner, not disqualified by any bye-law, who shall be recommended as eligible by any *three* members, shall be admitted a member at any time by the Committee of Council, or by the Council of any Branch."

"Subscriptions. The subscription to the Association shall be One Guinea annually; and each member, on paying his subscription, shall be entitled to receive the publications of the Association for the current year. The subscription shall date from the 1st January in each year, and shall be considered as due unless notice of withdrawal be given in writing to the Secretary on or before the 25th of December previous."

Either of the following modes of payment may be adopted:—

1. Payment by Post-Office Order to the Treasurer (Sir C. Hastings, M.D., Worcester), or to the undersigned.

2. Payment to the Secretary of the Branch to which the member belongs.

3. Members residing in the Metropolis and vicinity can make their payments through the publisher of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, Mr. Thomas John Honeyman, 37, Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, W. C.

PHILIP H. WILLIAMS, *General Secretary.*

Worcester, July 1857.