

burden upon society. It would be impossible to pass too severe a censure on so grave, cruel, and foolish an injustice. The Commissioners in Lunacy have already expressed their fixed opinion that workhouses are not adapted by construction and management for the proper care of the insane; and the Medico-Psychological has done well to place on record a resolution to the like effect.

It is certainly very much to be regretted that the large amount of important material which the experience of different asylums must afford should hitherto have been of such comparatively little scientific use. One of the reasons why it has not been properly made use of, and cannot yet be made use of, is the want of a complete and uniform plan of recording asylum statistics. This was a subject urgently demanding immediate consideration; and we are glad to observe that the attention of the Association has been aroused to it, and that there is a fair prospect of something being done to make available for scientific purposes the experience of our numerous asylums. It may then, perhaps, be possible to settle the question, which yet remains undecided, whether insanity is really on the increase or not.—*The Lancet*, July 22, 1865.

The "Restraint" System in French Public Asylums for the Insane.

DR. LOCKHART ROBERTSON has forwarded to us an interesting paper—which we cannot print entire owing to heavy demands on our space—on the condition of the insane patients in two asylums belonging to the department of the Seine Inférieure. Considering that one of these asylums (that at Rouen) is under the care of M. Morel, and the other (that at Quatremares), under the superintendence of M. Dumesnil, it might have been supposed that the influence of these two enlightened physicians, whose reputation is European, would have availed to do away with the worst features of the dark times of alienist medicine. It is not so, however. Although the establishments in question appear to be favorable specimens of French county asylums, the general mode of treatment practised in them is such as would be considered a disgrace to any English provincial asylum. We regret to be obliged to draw this odious comparison, but it will be allowed that we are justified in making it when it is stated that restraint in its most objectionable forms seems to be the pivot on which all efforts at subduing the violence of the insane turn; that the value of food and alcohol in subduing maniacal excitement is unknown; that seclusion *for so long as two years* had been inflicted on two patients said to be suffering from nymphomania (!); that the rooms are crowded, bare, ill-ventilated, ill-furnished, and unprovided with means for washing; the beds wooden and cumbrous; and, what is as bad as anything, employment (except

among the quieter male patients at Quatremares, who are beneficially employed in garden work) almost *nil*. As we read of strait-jackets in which acute maniacs are confined *for months*, of torture inflicted (with the vain idea of controlling mania) by the continuous dropping of water on the head, of patients lying on dank urinous-smelling straw, and of other similar horrors, we seem unconsciously transported (as Dr. Robertson remarks) to the ghastly scenes of old Hanwell or old "Bedlam." And what strikes us with especial force, in these days of improved dietetic science, is the scanty and poor diet afforded to the insane—a class of persons whose condition demands generous nutriment more than almost any other.

It cannot be believed that two distinguished psychologists like MM. Morel and Dumesnil are willing parties to the continuance of so barbarous a state of things. We suspect (as the writer of the report on which we base these remarks seems to do) that the interference of lay governors, and above all of stupid old *religieuses*, has more to do with its continued existence; and we would call upon the more enlightened of our French brethren to shake off the fetters which these and such as these would place on free medical thought and practice, and to insist that such scandals shall cease to disgrace France in the midst of the nineteenth century.—*The Lancet*, August 19, 1865.

Condemnation before Trial.

THOUGHTFUL men have observed with pain and regret that of late an evil habit has grown up, on the part of certain newspapers, of passing judgment on a criminal before trial. Beginning commonly with an avowal that they do not wish to prejudge the case, they proceed forthwith to lay stress on every circumstance of aggravation, to slur over, or sneer at, every imaginable circumstance of extenuation, and to wind up with certain violent appeals to the good sense of the community as to the urgent necessity of saving society from the dangerous consequences of humanitarian zeal. They are not quite so logically extravagant as the judge whose wig lately suffered so severely in its conflict with the quaker's hat, and who on one occasion reached such a height of philosophy as to tell a jury that he was not sure whether it was not more necessary to punish a lunatic than a sane man, as far as the welfare of society was concerned, but they are aiming well to reach that height. Perhaps the worst of the sinners in this regard amongst the newspapers now is not the 'Daily Telegraph,' but the 'Saturday Review.' The 'Telegraph' sometimes shows that it has bowels of compassion and lucid intervals; but the chief glory of the 'Saturday Review' seems to be to display an unflinching and unmitigated brutality, and