

Foote (Geo. F.)

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HOMŒOPATHIC
INSANE ASYLUM.

BY GEO. F. FOOTE, M. D.

The Homœopathic practice of medicine in this country alone now numbers over five thousand physicians, while its recipients and believers are numbered by many hundreds of thousands. These are from the most intelligent and respectable portion of the community,—people of good sense, good judgment, in every way competent to distinguish between right and wrong. They represent all professions, trades and arts, and their numbers are increasing at a ratio in harmony with the progressive age in which we live; affording abundant evidence that this great system of medical reform is one of the powers that helps to modern improvements, while it is promoting the happiness and well-being of mankind.

We have colleges for the instruction of those who aspire to the healing art; we have dispensaries and hospitals where the unfortunate sick may receive proper medical attention; but we have no asylum where the sick insane can receive the blessings of Homœopathic treatment.

This is a startling fact, in view of the daily calls that rise up from all parts of the country for our aid in this direction, and even in view of the danger that besets our friends, our families and even our own persons, liable as we all are to become victims to this terrible scourge, which may at any time drop

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into the domestic circle leaving a direful wake of desolation and heart-rending misery.

The time has come for action, the call is imperative, and we cannot longer fold our hands and, McCawber like, "wait for something to turn up," wait for somebody else to do this work. We must bring this matter home to our own doors and stand face to face with the facts; and they are facts which, when duly reflected upon, are startling in the extreme.

Is it not alarming when we come to reflect that we ourselves, or any member of our household, a bosom companion, or our children, if attacked with this disease, must be hurried off to an asylum where the Allopathic treatment reigns supreme? Where we and our friends cannot, in any particular, be advisory as to the administration of remedies, or even to visit them in person? Is it not alarming when we reflect that there is no retreat, no home, where, if necessity requires it, they can be sent and receive that benign treatment our long experience has taught us is so efficacious in curing the sick mind as well as the sick body? Nothing but Allopathy for ourselves and our dearest friends, when the worst of all calamities, in the shape of disease, shall beset us or them?

We may continue to walk our daily rounds and pursue our daily avocations with commendable zeal; we may gather into our garners the goods of this life, and even say to our souls, "Take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." But we are in danger; the storm king may be howling in the distant horizon, and the deluge may come with terrific fury and engulf us in a fearful flood, entailing desolation and sorrow when we least expect it.

These are serious thoughts that it behoves us to dwell upon. We are personally interested, and the prospective possibilities demand a preparation; while the pressing calls of those now suffering, demand *immediate* action.

The subject is momentous and we must be up and doing. We must work until we have an abiding place for our sick insane, where we can pour on the oil and wine, where we can say to our suffering friends come and be healed.

We must talk about it in our homes, in our offices, upon the street corners and among our patrons. We must give from our own stores, and gather from the overflowing coffers of our

friends. And if we all labor with a heart and will, we shall soon see our efforts crowned with success, and the desire of our hearts gratified, while the rewards due to a good action shall tell upon our lives, and "our children shall rise up and call us blessed."

THE ORGANIZATION.

To ensure success in any enterprise those engaged in it must become conversant with the business in hand. They must know their wants and the means to secure the ends sought. They must profit by past experience and be able to anticipate probable results.

It is also equally important in this great work, from which we anticipate so much good professionally and socially, that we carefully canvass this matter.

And first, what do we want? The answer is, the best asylum for the insane that the ingenuity of man, duly enlightened by all past experience, can devise. The best designs for buildings, combining all modern improvements, with the best system of ventilation and warming, the most appropriate furniture, and the best and most humane system of management, where everything combines to give a home-like appearance; where a mild and proper restraint can be enforced without the horrors of bars and prison discipline, and where all this can be combined with an intelligent administration of hygienic measures and Homœopathic medicines, so mild, so efficacious, so certain in their results. Where we can demonstrate to the world that for this disease, as well as for other sufferings, we hold in our hands, through Divine aid, the balance of medical power; and where we can add to the charities of this progressive age, a new blessing pregnant with the good of life, and at the same time establish a new era in the progressive uses of our much loved profession.

Having established our wants, how shall we obtain the end? And this must lead us to the inquiry as to what has already been done, and what is now being done for the unfortunate insane throughout the world?

Within the past few years great changes have been wrought in their management. Comfortable quarters and pleasant homes, take the place of crowded jails and prison cells; mild

measures and persuasive means, take the place of cruel stripes and galling chains; while a wholesome diet and the best hygienic treatment are substituted for a prisoner's fare, and the loathsome exhalations of the felon's dungeon.

And while everything is being done that shall conduce to the comfort of the patients, and while the best, most kind-hearted and worthy men are selected as superintending physicians, yet in all the institutions throughout the world, up to the present time, the medical management is Allopathic. The treatment consists in supporting the body with a wholesome diet and hygienic surroundings, and abiding the event of time. In other words it is expectant. They give but little medicine to reach the conditions of the mind, for the reason that they look upon these as an adjunct of debility that does not require special medication: a striking contrast to the Homœopathic law of cure which accepts the conditions of the mind as an expression of the disease, the symptoms of which condition form a prominent guide to the selection of the remedy.

Other questions arise that concern us at this stage of the proceedings, viz: what plan of organization has been found to answer the most desirable ends, and what is best adapted to our wants?

These are important questions and must be answered before our plan of operations is matured.

Both in this country and in Europe there are three modes of inaugurating similar institutions:

1st. As public charities under the direction and support of the State, county, or city, free to all who are not able to pay,—as the Utica and Blackwell Island Asylums.

They receive some paying patients who, with reason, complain of the over crowded conditions, and the unpleasant associations incident to pauperism.

2d. As private asylums, of which there are but two in this country, one at Flushing, under the management of Dr. Barstow, and the other at Canandaigua, under the management of Dr. Cook. These in no sense can be termed charities. They are individual enterprises, created with a view to money making, same as the various water cures and private hospitals. The objections to these may be found in the fact that they are necessarily expensive. The patient must pay, in addition to

the outlay, for medical supervision, attendants, living, etc., a per cent. on the cost of the ground and buildings, with a profit to the owners. This places it beyond the reach of a large proportion of our worthy and most respectable inhabitants who have but a moderate competence.* And again, the number necessarily being limited, the patients cannot be classified according to their mental conditions. Whereas with larger associations both sexes are each arranged into six or eight divisions with separate apartments. And finally they are not under the supervision of a board of trustees to watch over the general interest of the patients. There is no appeal from the superintending physician, who is a participant in the profits.

3d. As a close corporation, an intermediate between the two former—like the Bloomingdale Asylum, New York, the Retreat for the Insane, at Hartford, Conn., and the McLean Asylum, at Summerville, near Boston.

These are founded on private charity and endowments. The lands are obtained and the buildings erected and furnished by contributions for this object. But the current expenses are paid by the patients, each in proportion to the rooms occupied and the attention given. The superintending physician and officers are all salaried, and have no pecuniary interest beyond this. It is under the direction of a board of trustees, selected from well known and most trustworthy citizens, who control the management and keep a general supervision of its operations. They stand between the public and the officers, listen to complaints and correct abuses. The advantages are—

1st. It is a large charity without the stigma of pauperism attached to it.

2d. It is self-supporting.

3d. It is accessible to a large class of respectable citizens who are able and willing to pay current expenses, but are not able to pay extravagant prices. At the same time it is equally

* Average cost per week in different asylums for each patient, for 1869, the charges for each varying according to the attention required.

McLean Asylum, near Boston, (about)	\$16.00
Bloomingdale Asylum, New York, (about).....	12.00
Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane, Philadelphia.....	8.72
Blackwell Island Asylum, New York (pauper), 1200 patients, with room intended for only 600, (including clothing).....	2.34
At Flushing (private) charges are from \$35 to \$55.	

available to the more wealthy who can receive the attention, and be accommodated with quarters commensurate with their ability to pay. It is, to all intents and purposes, a respectable charity, where the occupants and their friends feel that they are giving a *quid pro quo*.

4th. It being a close corporation the board of trustees, or governors, who are chosen for life, fill all vacancies that may occur in their number, thus placing it above all political influence, while the managing power acquires experience and a paternal interest and devotion attained only through time and continued application.

It has been proposed to raise the funds to build an asylum by issuing stocks with a promise of dividends; but any business man must readily see that this must result in a failure. No one wishing to make investments with a sure return of profits would venture upon such expectation, knowing that in justice to the patients all the surplus, above current expenditures, should be applied in improving their condition by beautifying their surroundings, contributing to their amusements, and in every way adding to their comforts, so as to make the time pass as pleasantly as their mental state will admit.

But few persons would care to speculate out of the unfortunate insane, while all are interested in providing for them a pleasant retreat with home-like comforts and good medical attendance. A stock organization precludes all hope of any donations or endowments as well as any aid from the State.

Having visited the different asylums and witnessed their workings, having been in consultation with their governors and superintendants, who have generously aided in these investigations, I am of the opinion that the best form of organization is that of a close corporation above described, like the Bloomingdale asylum.

In addition to the reasons given above in favor of this plan, I will add that by adopting it we can safely rely upon aid from the State. Bloomingdale received \$10,000 a year for a number of years, until by donations and advance of real estate they were placed above this want.

In this charity, as in most others, we have been deprived of our rights to be represented in the legislative disbursements. Heretofore all private as well as public donations have been

given to asylums placed under Allopathic supervision. This has been an injustice to us, and an injustice to the friends of Homœopathy.

Knowing, as we do, that this disease would be far less formidable, its duration greatly shortened, and the number of incurable cases materially lessened by Homœopathic treatment, we have a RIGHT to demand that a public asylum should be set apart to our management, where we can extend its blessings to a large class of patients desiring it, and where we can show to the world its superior advantages.

A strong appeal to the friends of Homœopathy, with the facts duly presented, will result in substantial aid. It has been given for other charities, and it will be given for this. Homœopaths have contributed largely to Allopathic charities, and Homœopaths will contribute to a Homœopathic charity. Let every one, then, put his shoulder to the wheel and feel personally that success depends upon action, and in the end we shall see an asylum that shall be a lasting monument in proof of the law *similia similibus curantur*.

At a regular meeting of the HOMŒOPATHIC MEDICAL SOCIETY OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF NEW YORK, held this Nov. 10th, 1869, the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted:

Whereas, The Lunatic Asylums of this State, owing to their present overcrowded conditions, are inadequate to the wants of our increasing population,

Whereas, The Medical practice of the existing asylums is exclusively Allopathic, thus debarring our patients from their chosen system,

Whereas, We believe that under Homœopathic treatment mental diseases are less formidable, the time required for their cure much shorter, and the number of incurable patients less than under any other system of medical practice, therefore

Resolved, That this society recognizes the necessity for an additional Lunatic Asylum in which patients should have Homœopathic treatment; and that we will aid in its establishment.

Resolved, That GEO. F. FOOTE, M. D., being engaged in preparing plans and soliciting subscriptions for the organization and construction of such an asylum, this society endorse his project and recommend it to the profession and the community.

HENRY D. PAINE, M. D.,
President.

HENRY M. SMITH, M. D.,
Secretary.

