ARTICLE III.

THE FARM OF ST. ANNE. BY JOHN M. GALT, M. D., SUPER- INTENDENT AND PHYSICIAN OF THE EASTERN LUNATIC ASYLUM, VIRGINIA.

In order to find employment for its insane inmates, the idea was carried out at the Bicêtre, some years since, to purchase a farm in the neighborhood of Paris ; and through the exertions of the enlightened Ferrus, this, with its great attendant advantages, was accomplished in the " Farm of St. Anne."

We propose that to every asylum there should be a farm and farmhouse attached—in other words, the adoption of a plan analogous to that of the Farm of St. Anne, but with a number of modifications based upon the ideas which we go on to advance. First, then, the general outline is that of a farmer and his family to reside in a central house suitable for the accommodation of his own household, and some lunatics. The mass of these patients are intended to be working-men—those of quiet demeanor—laboring under chronic insanity. These will spend a happier life than in the crowded wards of an asylum, and also a more useful one, tending by their work to be self-supporting. A second class will consist of a few lunatics whose unsoundness of mind has not yielded through the operation of the various constituent influences of an asylum ; in whom the monotony of an institution seems, indeed, to tally with the character of their derangement, actually giving it a fixedness instead of affording relief. By the arrangement which we propose there is obtained the action of the family circle, but in a form excluding the evils inherent in any position of a patient amongst his friends ; and this arrangement, by more decidedly calling into play the undiseased faculties than occurs in an asylum, would tend in a greater degree to a restoration of sanity. As this section of the insane is marked by no unvarying and similar characteristics, for a portion of them strong rooms would be required, but only a few, which might be either in the central edifice or in cottages. So far as the sick are concerned, in the first place, we occasionally find an epidemic breaking out in the crowded wards of a hospital, and numbers of the patients will be swept off ; moreover, in that event, the very despondency attending the sight of so much disease and death around them is calculated to hasten the end of such weakly constituted persons as the insane. How refreshing, then, must be a plan, to these patients, which sends them to breathe the pure

air and experience the quietude of the country ! Again : there are cases of chronic disorders of various kinds, in some of which the malady seems either aggravated or even engendered by the air itself of a large establishment, contaminated as it is by so many breaths ; here, again, we have a prospect of benefit alike from the change of air and, in addition, by a comparatively purer state of atmosphere.

I have elaborated the proposition involved above as fully as I would wish, so far as regards details, for practically these would be easy, if the general outline were previously adopted. I have, therefore, but little to say in addition, as to particulars, but would amplify as to further advantages by which the scheme under discussion is, in my poor judgment, attended.

Commencing, therefore, with the class to which I have given priority of mention, or the chronic insane, I think, in the first place, that for them a more agreeable locality would be acquired than the mephitic air of a hospital. And still further to ensure this, instead of placing them in the farm-house, I would have a series of cottages. These, too, being quiet and manageable, very slight fastenings would be needed—in truth, rather for the apparent supposition of guarding the public than for any real precaution against escape. I think, indeed, that such an arrangement is doubly suitable for those with minds thus impaired. For, first, as I have said, what need is there of confining these where they are disturbed by the noise and inhale the air affected by the unpleasant habits of so many patients ? And, secondly, they are entitled to an exemption from the bolts and bars that are demanded for the more unruly, for recent and other cases requiring precautions of the kind. Indeed, as expressed elsewhere by myself, in a different article, I am satisfied that the insane, generally, are susceptible of a much more extended liberty than they are now allowed. Even as it is, on going from some institutions which I could mention to those of New England, the latter, by the great contrast which they afford in this respect, appear mere prison-houses, notwithstanding their many internal attributes of comfort and elegance, and a general management and systematic action in which they are superior to the asylums referred to, and, in fact, have few equals anywhere. I desire, then, to see the plan which I propose put in execution, as much because of the greater degree of liberty which at least one section of the insane would attain as for any other reason.

At the village of Gheel, in Belgium, situated thirty-five miles from Antwerp, in the department of the Deux Nèthes, it is well known that the insane, amounting to many hundreds, have been placed under the management of the villagers, instead of having them in one large building, as elsewhere. These lunatics have nearly the same freedom as the

citizens of the commune, going at large everywhere. For example, there are several "ostaminets" in the village, whither many of these patients resort to enjoy their pipe and glass of beer, and to play at billiards; and "their presence nowhere excites the smallest attention." I have before me some half a dozen accounts of this unique and interesting experiment, by as many visitors of the medical profession. I refer to one of the latest, found in a work published in London, in 1852, by Dr. N. F. Cumming, at the time of whose visit there were *one thousand of the insane* under the mode of treatment pursued at Gheel. Hear what he says, and observe how fully his remarks bear out the views which I have ventured to advance: "So far as I know, there is no establishment similar to Gheel in Europe. It undoubtedly possesses several advantages, and is capable of teaching us some important lessons. Of these the foremost lies in the fact that the insane may live in the enjoyment of almost unrestrained liberty, not only with little danger to the community which harbors them, but even as useful members of that community. How much misery might the due appreciation of this truth have saved the unfortunate lunatics of Europe during the last forty years! Cooped up within their dungeon-walls, how many have dragged out a miserable existence uncheered by the glorious light of day and the fresh breezes of heaven! Gheel has also this great advantage, that the self-respect of the lunatic is not wounded by an array of guards and prison-walls: he feels himself a free man, and instead of being cut off from society, he mingles with his more fortunate fellow-men. Nor is this liberty frequently abused, only six or seven attempts to escape having been made during the past year." We repeat, then, that we are the more in favor of the plan which we propose, because it is calculated to give the insane a proper degree of freedom, instead of being cooped up as they now are in our best asylums. Would that the friends of the poor lunatics could be convinced of this deficiency; America might then have the honor of establishing at least one new principle in the government of those laboring under mental alienation. Up to this time what has she done in this respect? Absolutely nothing, must be the true answer with every unprejudiced mind. Whilst, indeed, those entrusted with the supervision of the insane, and particularly those at the head of the most richly endowed asylums, shall deem the true interests of their afflicted charge not to consist in aught on their part but tinkering gas-pipes and studying architecture, in order merely to erect costly and at the same time most unsightly edifices—erectures at which Mr. Ruskin would shudder—so long may we anticipate no advancement in the treatment of insanity, as far as the United States is concerned. Turning to another page of Dr. Cumming's little work, we find the

views also confirmed which we have brought forward as bearing upon the subject of health; for he observes that the physician who has the care of the insane at Gheel says that he "does not consider the mortality greater among the lunatics than among the sane population." And Dr. Cumming goes on to remark, further, that he himself "can vouch for having seen a man of ninety, hale and strong, and a woman of eighty, both lunatics." And we may mention that, in his account of Gheel, the distinguished medical psychologist, M. Moreau, (de Tours,) makes the following important comments to precisely the same effect: "*Les travaux auxquels se livrent les aliénés à Gheel, l'habitude d'une nourriture simple et frugale, comme celle des paysans flamands, l'air pur et salubre de la contrée, contribuent à leur bien-être physique. Il est impossible de n'être pas frappé de l'air bien portant, de l'embonpoint de ceux que l'on rencontre dans les rues et dans la campagne. En générale ils parviennent à un âge avancé. On en compte présentement, dans les colonies un certain nombre de quatre-vingt à quatre-vingt-dix ans. En 1838, il y avait deux centenaires.*"

As regards a second class—those not improving from the discipline of an asylum, and who still offer the prospect of amendment under different circumstances—it may be remarked, in addition to what we have already said, that one of the advantages pointed out long ago, and well-recognized in hospital treatment, is, that by a separation from their homes and friends, many morbid associations—ideas connected with the cause of the mental disturbance—are broken up, and are likely to be replaced by feelings of a more natural cast, and by conceptions less connected with deep-seated delusion. But there is, we are satisfied, reason to believe that, after a while, the same process is repeated over again in an asylum—that is, that the patient gradually interweaves his false notions, suspicions and other morbid traits with the constituents of an institution, almost precisely as he had done at home with respect to the circumstances there around him. Hence, in the first place, there would be the probability here of a revulsive action of beneficial character from being removed to a farm, as is proposed under our theory. But, secondly, there is another consideration which we consider as deserving attention in the highest degree, and this is, that, apart from all change of scene and its intrinsic psychical action, it must be more than probable that to some minds the influence of life, in some modification of the family circle, would be essentially more potent than any result attainable from the mental bearings appertaining to the constituents of a large establishment, such as an asylum generally is. For, after all, when we analyze the principles of moral management, there is not any great difference between the rules for the government of the sane mind and

those applicable to a mind diseased. And, indeed, it has been a doctrine advanced by standard authority, that the best policy in the general management of the lunatic consists in deviating as little as possible from the ordinary daily life and habits of the sane. Such being the case, no one but the most fanatical follower of Fourier and Owen can doubt that there are minds on whom the family circle would be far more effectual in its operation than the best efforts when connected with a hotel-like establishment.* For what wonderful, what powerful results in the life of nearly every one may be traced to the silent and almost unconscious workings of a few minds, mutually acting and reacting on each other! Hence, if there was no other reason for so doing, we would be led from this alone strenuously to advocate a system by which an opportunity offers to change, in some cases, the common life of a large establishment for the great but potent agency of the family circle—an agency which is indissolubly intertwined with the most salutary associations, and with the most tender and deeply rooted emotions of the heart—an agency whose wondrous and resistless power is felt and acknowledged by every kindred and nation and people of the earth.

The great influence of change of scene and air in disease has been a fact so generally acknowledged in medicine, that we need not enlarge on the advantages involved in the power of carrying out this change that the plan which we propose will enable to be effected. But we are satisfied, in addition, that the very abdominal affections which have proved an evil of such magnitude in many of our institutions are precisely the maladies that the new location will be calculated to benefit, as compared with the crowded wards of an asylum. Moreover, in the event of a sickly season, the general depressing influence of the numbers languishing and dying will also be lessened. And the fact that, in many hospitals, the occurrence of a death is concealed from the mass of the inmates proves the estimate which is placed upon this consideration. Besides, even under ordinary circumstances, there are, perhaps, some patients with so nervous a constitution that the mere sight of the mental suffering around them, or the disturbing influence of the noise and lamentations of their companions at night, in a large institution, is such as to render a position amongst fewer companions more advantageous than their usual situation.

It may be observed here, that at Gheel both males and females are received, and a general liberty is allowed.† Dr. Cumming says, in this

* I recollect the decrying observation of a patient as to a lately erected and beautiful saloon in an asylum—"but it does not look like people lived in it."

† With regard to the full merits of the system at Gheel, as compared with that in use elsewhere, we think a modification of the two preferable to either, and

regard, that, according to the physician of Gheel, Dr. Parigot, cases of illicit intercourse between the sexes are of rare occurrence. And† Esquirol states: "Quoique les hommes et les femmes aliénés vivent librement entre eux et avec les habitants, il n'en résulte rien fâcheux pour les mœurs; et les grossesses des femmes aliénées sont excessivement rares." But M. Joseph Guislain remarks: "Le libre commerce des deux sexes entre eux est encore un vice qui mène à l'immoralité, et qui ne peut nullement être salulaire aux aliénés." And it may be remarked, that, on the farm which we would have as an adjunct to every asylum, our hypothesis has reference to the male sex only, unless, indeed, there were a separate establishment, on a smaller scale, adapted to the females. The advantage, under present arrangements, to the latter, we should hope for in the elegant pleasure-grounds that might be enjoyed by parties of them, through the industry of the male patients—an industry which would be attended by the most fruitful results, when so properly applied as it could be on the farm which we propose. But, in truth, we should prefer that separate asylums should be everywhere provided for the two sexes—a measure rendering the additional idea of a farm applicable to the one sex, and to the other merely a large garden.

arrive at the same conclusion as M. Moreau: "Gheel n'est, après tout, à mes yeux, que la réalisation imparfaite d'une idée théorique pour laquelle je réserve toute mon intérêt toute mon admiration."

† As to another point, which we know by experience to be practically of the utmost importance, Esquirol observes, whilst discussing the arrangement at Gheel: "Quoique libres, ces malades ne sont jamais l'occasion d'accidents graves pour les femmes enceintes, ni pour les enfants du pays; et les habitants de Gheel vivent au milieu d'eux dans la sécurité la plus parfaite."