

We can confidently recommend the careful perusal of the present discourse to all who are engaged in erecting or improving public buildings for the sick and the insane.

ART. VI.—*A Manual for Attendants in Hospitals for the Insane.* By JOHN CURWEN, M.D., Superintendent and Physician of the Pennsylvania State Lunatic Asylum. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do you even so to them." 18mo. Philadelphia: 1851.

It is but a short time since we registered the appointment of Dr. Curwen to the important post that he now holds, and in the present work he gives us a proof of the earnestness with which he enters upon its duties. The number of attendants required in a well regulated hospital is so great, and their preparations for their respective offices so little cared for, that a code of directions would seem also indispensable to aid and advise them. What other superintendents are, from various circumstances, obliged to communicate verbally, Dr. Curwen has committed to paper and print, and we have no doubt but that both he and his patients will reap much advantage from it.

The character of the book will best be understood by extracts, which we make almost at random :—

"In making application for the situation of an attendant in a hospital for the insane, you have no doubt fully considered the difficulties and responsibility, together with the nature of those duties which you will be called upon to perform. Unless you have made up your mind to submit to much self-denial and many privations; unless you enter on the discharge of your duties with a full determination to perform those duties with hearty good will and a sincere desire to benefit those who may be

placed under your care ; unless you feel thoroughly imbued with the disposition to assist to the utmost of your ability in one of the most benevolent undertakings to which man can be called, it will be the part of prudence, as well as sound discretion, to retrace your steps, and turn your attention to some other vocation.

"Dissimulation and deception must be most scrupulously avoided ; and truth, candor and honesty characterize all communications with the insane. Policy and expediency, not say morality and religion, dictate this as the most proper course.

"The majority of those afflicted with insanity labor under some disorder of the general health, which may usually be regarded as the cause of the mental derangement. In these cases, however, the treatment required is such as to demand no more from the attendant than the steady and strict adherence to the directions of the physicians ; but instances are constantly occurring in every hospital where a patient is admitted with serious disease, or where some of the inmates are attacked with some disorder, which requires careful and particular attendance and treatment."

The second part contains directions for the administration of baths, the preparation of dietetic articles, and receipts for making fomentations, poultices, gargles, &c. We select from this the following :

"**DRESSING OF BLISTERS.**—Before applying a blister, the part on which it is to be placed should be well washed with soap and warm water, and thoroughly dried, the hair shaved off, and the skin irritated by being rubbed with a coarse towel, or, if this is not sufficient, with warm vinegar, &c. The blister should be in perfect contact with the skin, but should not, as is too often the case, be subjected to much pressure, for this retards vesication, and is a source of uneasiness to the patient. If, on examination, the skin beneath the blister be found reddened, the rising of the blister may be hastened by the application of a warm bread and milk, or flaxseed poultice, which effectually answers the object, and at the same time relieves the patient from the distressing pain and burning caused by the continuance of the blister.

"The dressing of a blister requires some skill, and much pain and inconvenience will be saved to the patient by careful attention and tender handling. Everything necessary for the operation, as the plaster spread &c., should be ready before commencing. Each of the vesicles is to be carefully nipped, with the points of a pair of sharp scissors, at their most depending part, and the serum evacuated. If the blister have properly

risen, the whole surface will be detached from the skin beneath in one or at most two or three large vesicles, and the loose cuticle must be removed. The particular dressing will be ordered by the physician. The plaster for the dressing should not be larger than the blistered surface.

“Issues and setons should be washed twice daily with warm water, and carefully dressed in accordance with the direction of the physician.”

DOMESTIC SUMMARY.

NEW YORK STATE INSTITUTION FOR IDIOTS.

At the late session of the Legislature an act was passed to establish an Asylum for Idiots, and appropriating six thousand dollars each year, for two years, for its support. It directed the appointment of five trustees by the Governor and Senate, who, with the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State and Comptroller, constitute the Board of Trustees. They are authorized to establish regulations for the government of the Asylum, to procure a suitable building, to employ the necessary teachers, keepers and assistants, to select twenty pupils from those whose parents or guardians are unable to provide for their support, some from each of the judicial districts of the State, and to receive as many pay pupils as can be conveniently accommodated, on such terms as they may deem just.

The Governor and Senate appointed JOHN C. SPENCER, WILLIAM L. MARCY, JAMES H. TITUS, (of N. Y.) Rev. WM. I. KIP and FRANKLIN TOWNSEND Trustees under the act. The Board met in July and appointed committees to look out for a building and a competent superintendent teacher. At a subsequent meeting the committee for that purpose, two of them, Messrs. Spencer and Marcy, having visited the school of Dr. Wilbur, at Barre, Mass., recommended that gentleman as Superintendent, and he was accordingly appointed.

The spacious building on the Troy road, heretofore known as the “Bull’s Head Tavern,” about two miles from the city, was procured for two years at a rent which was put at a very moderate rate by the liberality of the proprietor, Stephen Van Rensselaer, Esq. In the meantime circulars were sent by each of the trustees to the different judicial districts, making inquiries for suitable pupils. It was determined to assign two pupils for each judicial district, making sixteen, and to select the remaining four at large.

An executive committee was appointed at a subsequent meeting, consisting of John C. Spencer, William L. Marcy and Franklin Townsend,