

## A "COLONY" FOR EPILEPTICS AND IMBECILES IN LANCASHIRE.

The Joint Asylum Committee of the Manchester and Chorlton Boards of Guardians have applied to the Local Government Board for sanction to the purchase of an estate near Chorley, known as the Anderton Hall estate, for the purpose of providing an asylum on the "colony" system for imbeciles and epileptics.

The committee recently appointed two of their number, Dr. Rhodes and Mr. Alderman McDougall, a deputation to visit Belgium, France, and Germany. These two gentlemen visited a large number of asylums, and had come to the conclusion, reinforced by the findings of their committee, that an asylum on the "colony" system was required. The Anderton Hall estate was found to be the most suitable for this purpose. It is pleasantly situated on a slope opposite Rivington Pike, above the Rivington reservoir. It contains 237 acres, could be purchased for £19,000, and was not more than twenty miles from the two unions; two railway stations were easily accessible from it.

The committee proposed that the asylum should be occupied by epileptics and imbeciles of the harmless class, of whom they had at present about 600 in the workhouses alone. The asylum would consist of a number of villas put up on different parts of the estate, and they would be placed away from the Rivington reservoir, so that if there were any surface drainage it would run in an opposite direction. Further, the committee proposed to lay down an intercepting sewer which would absolutely stop any possibility of contamination of the reservoir water.

## SEWAGE DISPOSAL.

The coal filter briefly alluded to in the October number of the JOURNAL was first brought into prominence by Mr. Joseph Garfield, A.M.I.C.E., engineer of the Wolverhampton Sewage Outfall Works, who recommends that it should be constructed as follows:

The effluent drain-pipes are covered with a 6-inch layer of coal, about half-inch cubes in size. This layer is blinded with a little quarter-inch cube coal, above this comes a layer of twelve inches of coal, one-eighth inch cubes, and next a layer, three feet deep, of one-sixteenth cubes. The top course is a 6-inch layer of coal dust, which will pass a three-sixteenth inch mesh. This gives a total depth of five feet, and when circumstances will permit this is the minimum depth that should be used. It is unnecessary to have the filter tanks watertight, the effluent pipes being always open.

The sludge should be removed by precipitation or otherwise before the sewage is passed on to the filter. Charging the filter is effected by means of narrow metallic distributing channels placed on the surface at distances of about one foot apart. The sewage is turned on for twelve hours at the rate of about 200 gallons per square yard, and thus the filter works for twelve hours and rests a corresponding period in each day. Dr. Fosbroke, the county medical officer for Worcestershire, from whose report to his council (1) the foregoing description of the filter and its method of working has been taken, states that his "experience of the coal filter certainly brings me in full accord with the county medical officer for Staffordshire when he says 'the results obtained from these filters are highly satisfactory,' (and) on experimental data 'the preference must be given to the coal filter.'" In a lecture delivered by Dr. Reid, the county medical officer for Staffordshire, before the members of the Sanitary Inspectors' Association, he contrasts the results of experiments made with three descriptions of filters: (1) one composed of sand and gravel, specially constructed on Lowcock's principle; (2) a filter made up of coke breeze; and (3) a Garfield coal filter, in which the superiority of the last-named filter was considered to be satisfactorily demonstrated; and a table is given showing that while the Lowcock filter, though inferior to the Garfield, was still fairly satisfactory, the coke breeze filter was, to all intents and purposes, useless. "Coal," says Dr. Reid, "as a filtering medium is superior to gravel, and far superior to coke breeze;" and again, with reference to the Exeter septic tank method of purification, "from the first I looked upon this method with disfavour—notwithstanding the unanimity with

which engineers and others hastened to embrace it,—because it appeared to me to violate the great principle which hitherto had guided us, of keeping the sewage as free as possible from putrefactive changes previous to its application to the land or artificial filters. Up to the present time (February, 1898) I have not seen any analytical results from this—the septic tank—method of treatment which have caused me to modify my opinion, although I need not say that when such evidence is forthcoming I shall at once admit my error." It may be added that as late as a few weeks ago Dr. Reid had not changed the opinion which he had been led to form respecting the merits of the Garfield filter as contrasted with the results obtained by the system in use at Exeter. Mr. Garfield, in a letter dated August 27th, 1898, says in reply to an inquiry, "With reference to the sludge, I think that with domestic sewage a proportion of it can be got rid of by using a large-grain filter first; but before the sewage is run on to this it ought to be passed through a small settling or detritus tank to remove the heavy matter. Coal will be found the most suitable material for the large-grain filter also." In coal districts this filter will be found to be a simple and inexpensive way of dealing with domestic sewage, as no costly tank is required—in one case the ground has simply been excavated and the vacant space filled in with coal in the manner described; the filtering material will last for an indefinite period, the "royalty" asked for is a merely nominal one, and the effluent is such that the most exacting river pollution inspector cannot possibly object to its direct passage into a water channel.—J. B. S.

(<sup>1</sup>) Report upon sewage disposal, bacteriological filters (tanks).

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#### THE TREATMENT OF IMBECILES AND EPILEPTICS.

The Local Government Board have sanctioned the acquisition of a large area of land by the Leicester Board of Guardians for the purposes of an experiment in the treatment of the imbeciles and epileptics now in the Leicester workhouse. The proposed new departure is the practical outcome of an inquiry instituted on the Continent by the Chorlton Board of Guardians, with the view of ascertaining the advantages of the method of treatment now adopted in Belgium and Germany.

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#### SHOULD IMBECILES WORK?

This question arose at the meeting of the Chester Board of Guardians lately upon a letter from Dr. Kenyon, the medical officer of health, stating that it had come to his knowledge that some of the imbeciles at the workhouse were employed mowing grass and chopping sticks. He thought the use of hedge clippers, scythes, &c., by them was highly dangerous. The clerk stated that the workhouse master considered that it was very much better that the imbeciles should be employed in some way, but he would submit the doctor's question to the department in London and have the matter settled. He (the clerk) thought if any of the imbeciles were dangerous it was the duty of the medical officer specifically to point them out. The master said in November the medical officer wrote a note to him strictly prohibiting the imbeciles from working or using any tools that were dangerous to themselves and others. The men were kept indoors for a short time until they clamoured to go to work. The matter was placed before the house committee, and they unanimously decided that the imbeciles should be allowed to work in future.—Any further action was deferred pending the reply of the Local Government Board.

It is somewhat surprising that Dr. Kenyon should be so ignorant of the treatment of the insane as to raise a question of this kind. Dr. Weatherly complains of the prejudice and ignorance of the general public; but it would seem necessary to inaugurate a crusade of information by beginning to instruct those who pre-eminently should know something of our work.

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