

## Establishment of a Colony for Epileptics in Wisconsin

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The subject of provision for sufferers from epilepsy is one deserving in a high degree the attention of philanthropic individuals and communities, and it is highly appropriate that the medical profession should take the initiative in anything that is to be accomplished for the welfare of this class.

The unfortunate and necessitous condition of the victims of epilepsy need not be extensively dwelt upon here. A large majority of all those afflicted with epilepsy are either permanently or periodically incapacitated for the ordinary responsibilities, duties or pleasures of life. Probably one-third of them are palpably insane or mentally impaired to such an extent that they are periodically or permanently placed in the asylum or alms-house, where they are the source of unending anxiety and trouble from their sudden and distressing convulsive attacks, and likewise from the insane madness and fury which often accompany or replace these attacks and during which such patients often commit acts of violence and destruction.

The presence of these insane epileptics among the other inmates is injurious, especially in the hospitals for the acute insane, where there are many curable and convalescent patients who are disturbed and terrified by the epileptic paroxysms. Furthermore, their own welfare demands such care, treatment and custody as can only be provided in an institution of their own.

On the other hand such victims of epilepsy as have only infrequent attacks and have not become so seriously impaired mentally as to require confinement, are in a not less distressing position in the community. Their sickness debars them from pursuing all ordinary avocations or occupying any position of responsibility or trust, and makes them objects of dread and abhorrence notwithstanding the fact that they may be during nine-tenths of the time as capable of transacting business as the average citizen...

The states of Ohio, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, not to mention several others, have already established institutions for the epileptic which are admirably equipped for their purpose, and are accomplishing valuable work in custodial care, in industrial employment, in curative treatment, and last, but far from least, in the study of epilepsy, as to its etiology, pathology and pathogenesis. The same is true of all the more progressive European states. The Craig colony in Sonyea, N.Y., has served to some extent as a model in this country and has grown to a capacity of over 1,000. It has a tract of 1,800

acres of land and will ultimately have a capacity of over 2,000...

The plan which it is universally agreed is most appropriate is the establishment of an industrial colony upon a large tract of land suitably situated for agricultural employment, yet readily accessible to a good sized city and to railroad communication. Of course, there should be an abundant and unfailing supply of pure water, means for perfect drainage and all other hygienic conditions. The buildings should be of a domestic style of architecture suitably grouped for service and for classification. The tract of land should be of such ample extent that complete separation of all insane epileptics could be secured, so that these latter need not be brought in contact with those who are practically sane.

The State of Wisconsin is behind the times in this matter, and needs arousing to its duty in the premises...

A movement for formulating appropriate legislation should at once be set on foot and, indeed, the signs of the times indicate it has already begun. A bill will undoubtedly be introduced at the next session of the legislature providing for the selection and purchase of a tract of land...It is unquestionable that eventually, and indeed, at the present moment, Wisconsin has 1,000 of this unfortunate class urgently in need of care...

We were very glad to see this subject brought to the attention of the State Medical Society at its recent meeting by W. A. Gordon of the Northern Hemisphere Hospital for the Insane. Dr. Gordon made an able and telling presentation of the subject and his views found hearty support.

Dr. Gordon recommends that a concerted movement should be made upon the legislature next winter to secure the setting aside of a tract of land of ample dimensions, and an appropriation of \$300,000 for the purchase of land and erection of buildings...Dr. Gordon makes the wise suggestion that physicians desirous of seeing epileptics provided for should call upon their respective candidates for the legislature as soon as nominated and while their minds are in a plastic state, and ask for a pledge to support this most deserving measure; after election is over representatives of the people are apt to have a less keen interest in the wishes of their constituents; there can be little doubt that his measure would be heartily supported as soon as its merits are understood, and that the movement would be popular with the people.

We would urge upon our readers to interest themselves in this matter in their respective communities.

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