

**Thoughts on insanity and its causes, and on the management of the insane : to which are appended observations on the report for 1850, of the Lunatic Asylum of the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire / By a Mechanic [W. Williamson].**

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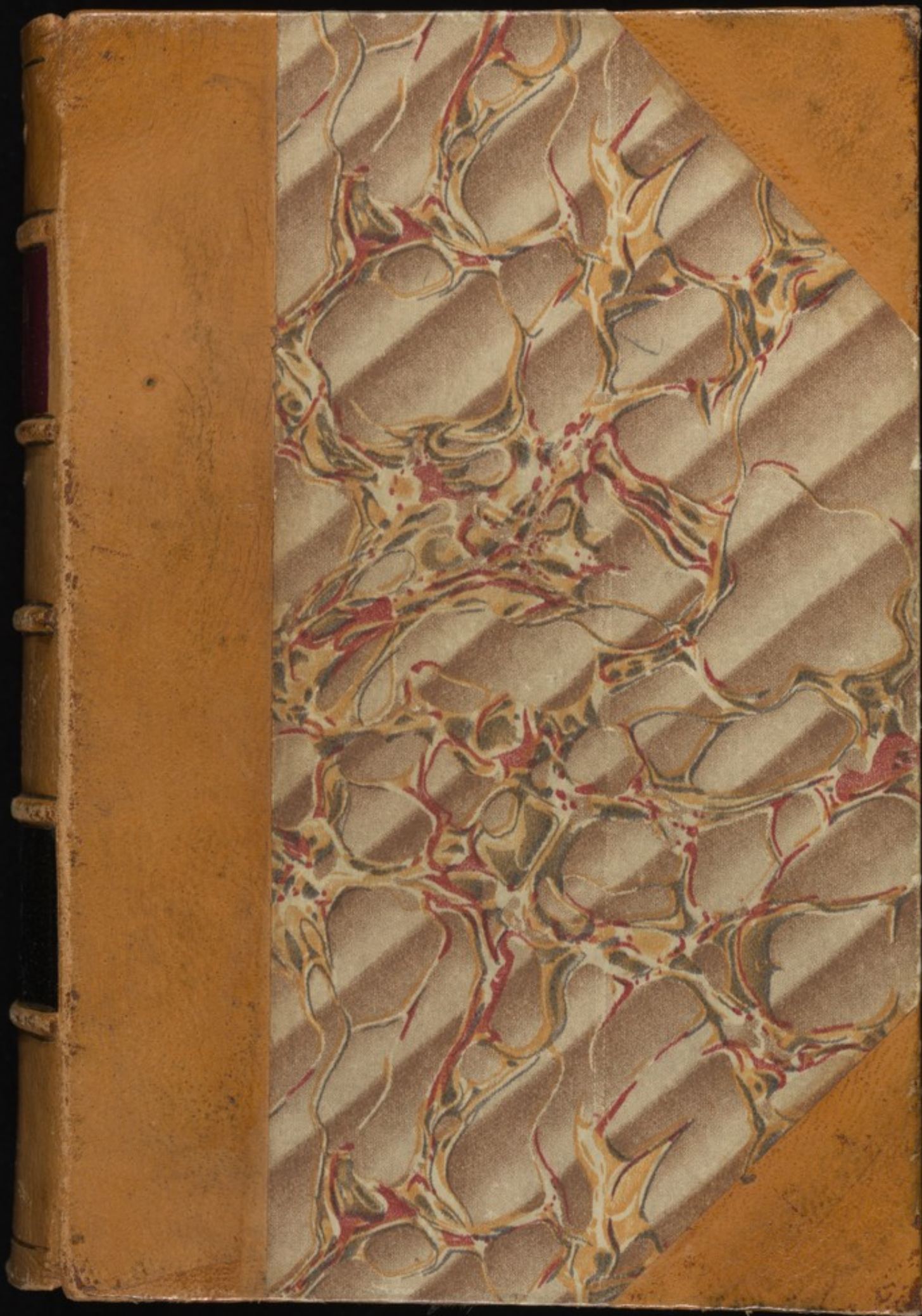
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22

THOUGHTS

ON

INSANITY AND ITS CAUSES,

AND ON THE

MANAGEMENT OF THE INSANE.

TO WHICH ARE APPENDED

OBSERVATIONS ON THE REPORT FOR 1850, OF THE  
LUNATIC ASYLUM OF THE NORTH AND EAST  
RIDINGS OF YORKSHIRE.

BY A MECHANIC.

LONDON :

CHARLES GILPIN, 5, BISHOPSGATE-STREET WITHOUT.

1851.

TO THE READER

that venturing before the public I am not so foolish as to think that because I have wrought a few years in my art, and have thus gone much in contact with the masses, that therefore I understand medicine. The full understanding of the causes and treatment of disease is a problem far above my comprehension, and would require lifetime research and data to solve it. I should not venture up a few hypotheses and try to arrange the theories which have flowed across my mind; although in doing so they may be of some slight use to those who consider the subject of medicine.

Many of the cases brought forward as illustrations are imaginary ones. I have described them as they occurred. But one at all connected with an Asylum will see self-evident evidence that they are genuine; I could have given more, but I wish to be brief.

In the observations on the report of the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, which are appended, I have endeavored to hold up one asylum more than others which may be equally well managed, both in our own country and abroad. In so writing that report, it seemed to me that the hope to make known some of my views, and I thought no harm could arise if I inserted them just in the form in which they were presented to the Chairman and Committee of the Asylum, might make observations.

W. WILLIAMSON

## TO THE READER.

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IN thus venturing before the public, I am not so foolish as to think, that because I have wrought a few years in an asylum, and have thus come much in contact with the insane, that therefore I understand insanity. The full understanding of the causes and treatment of insanity is a problem far above my comprehension, and would require far more research and data to solve it, than could be collected by one who has to earn a livelihood by the sweat of his brow; yet this is no reason why I should not gather up a few fragments and try to arrange the thoughts which have floated across my mind; though, in thus offering them to others, I may run the risk of being considered theoretic or impracticable.

None of the cases brought forward as illustrations are imaginary ones. I have described them as they occurred. Any one at all conversant with an asylum will see sufficient evidence that they are genuine; I could have given more, but I wish to be brief.

In the observations on the report of the Asylum for the North and East Riding, which are appended, I have no wish to hold up one asylum more than others which may be equally well managed, both in our own country and abroad; but, on reading that report, it seemed to give me scope to make known some of my views, and I thought no harm could arise if I inserted them just in the form in which they were presented to the Chairman and Committee of Visitors, rather than make alterations.

W. WILLIAMSON.

YORK, 1851.

## THOUGHTS, &c.

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WITHOUT attempting to define what insanity is, or presuming to give a logical illustration of my views, I have long entertained the idea, that, notwithstanding any appearances or effects which may be produced on the bodily frame, the *root*, the *germ* of the disorder, is of a *moral* (shall I say *spiritual*?) character; and, that so far as regards the cure in the strict sense of the word, we must exclaim with the magicians of old, "this is the finger of God," and he alone has the power to say, "come out of the man, thou unclean spirit." Yet it seems to be our duty to use all the moral means in our power, that we have reason to believe will tend towards the recovery; and as the physical is so blended with the mental, that the mind cannot suffer, but the body must more or less suffer with it, it certainly becomes us, so far as human ingenuity can suggest, to bring the body to that state in which the restorative principle will work most to advantage.

But, whatever insanity is, or whatever the cause, we may observe that it would be greatly to the advantage, and tend no little towards placing the afflicted in a favourable position, as regards recovery, if we could infuse into their minds more patience and resignation, more moral courage or fortitude. For until the desperate impatience, or the determined self-will, which is so much exhibited in some cases, is subsided; or until in other cases we have power to soothe and allay the unaccountable, and often what we may think cowardly fears, which are displayed, it seems in vain to expect progress towards amendment.

As insanity is so complicated, and consists of such different combinations that no two cases are exactly alike, so it will require a combination of judgment and effort, on the part of those under whose care the patients are placed; and the more they can come to one view in each case, and consequently, to one plan of counteracting what appears to be at fault therein, the more will their influence tend for good; but so far as any of them are doubtful in the plans pursued, as not being adapted to the case, or they break faith with each other, so far will their effort and influence be frustrated. To attain unity of action in the working of an asylum, I would suggest that the superintendent, and immediate attendants, shall frequently, fully, and freely discuss each case under care, (and the more collectively that can conveniently be done and perhaps the better,) and so take notes of such suggestions or opinions as may seem to be of use. Then all will not only understand, but be ready to carry out the plans decided upon. Such plans being subject to revision and alteration, whenever thought requisite; for the plans, (so far from being like the laws of the Medes and Persians which altered not), will frequently have to be modified to the altering circumstances of the patient, and their capability of adaptation should embrace the full range of human ingenuity and intellect. They should stop at no boundary so long as they have the approval of truth and morality. It is an infringement of the rules of etiquette, for one of the "medical profession" to hold a consultation with the "unprofessional;" but such rules are often worse than useless, and are evidence of a narrowness of spirit. For the superintendent who could throw them off, and proceed in some such way as is here suggested, would not only gain moral power over the attendants, to work out what was best; but he would gain knowledge of each case, and receive hints which would be of use towards advancing the cure. I think it was the late Dr. Ellis, who said he was frequently indebted to the patients themselves for suggestions, and sometimes in their own case. A wise man will be glad of ideas, which he can work out for good, no matter how mean the source from whence they spring. Should we not

all have more exalted moral influence over each other, if we were more to cultivate acquaintance with that heavenly handmaid, humility?

Though the means of curing insanity may be said to be as yet in their infancy, and though methods will perhaps be developed of which we have at present no conception, yet I am of opinion, that so far as man is concerned, the cure will depend more upon the religious and moral status, the brightness of the intellect, accompanied with quickness of discernment, and ready invention of the superintendent, and immediate attendants, than upon mere method; for which reason, the centralization of power in one individual, whose commands, the immediate attendants, as mere machines, must obey, will never work well in an asylum for the insane, however such a plan may be suited to an army. Here, mind has to be so continually coming in contact with mind, in all imaginable phases, that, as all the attendants who are worthy of the name, would feel the delicacy and responsibility of their situation, so they should be allowed an amount of discretionary power, which, if it should sometimes happen, on the spur of the moment, was not used so well as might be, yet it would be far wiser to pass over, with merely noting for experience towards future management, rather than blame.

It would seem that medical men only, are now chosen to be the superintendents of asylums for the insane. Without wishing to speak disparagingly of a profession so useful, for there are many of them well qualified to fill such situations, yet it will easily be perceived, that I think there are men quite as qualified who may not have received a diploma from a college of surgeons. Jepson, under whose management the Friends' Retreat, near York, gained so much celebrity, had no such certificate,—may be, he received his commission from the Great Physician.

From the education which surgeons receive, we need not wonder that they should treat insanity too much as a mere bodily disorder; whereas, that part of it which pertains to the body, is, in my opinion, mostly only as a consequence, or secondary part of the case. But, to grapple fully with the disease, we seem as if we should have almost to define and classify that which is



indefinite—to grasp at, and put into form, that which is intangible; and those whose studies lead them to deal with that which is material, are often, perhaps, unable so fully to divest themselves of prejudice, as clearly to discern that the major part of the treatment is required upon that which is far above matter. Though medical skill will be required to prevent or counteract the effect upon the bodily frame, yet in attempting to remove the cause, the afflicted will have to be put under a complete course of moral training, and that most perseveringly; for the right accomplishment of which, those into whose care they are placed, should be deeply skilled in the workings of the human heart. They will have to strive to call back the fitful and wandering from the illusory phantasies of the imagination; and so try to induce more coherence and continuity of thought upon subjects which have more reality for a basis, and cause the confusion of ideas to be less, by assisting the power of arrangement. To accomplish this object, amongst other expedients, I would suggest that pictures be placed before them, or anything which may probably arrest their attention; or that upon a black board attempts be made to induce them to chalk out simple outlines, geometrical figures, &c.; and so lead them on according to their capacity even until some might become accomplished delineators. The attendants should strive gently, delicately, and adroitly to unbend, and turn into other channels, the thoughts of those who are brooding over some real or imaginary calamity, and try to soothe the broken hearted into resignation, as well as encourage those in despair to trust to the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Amongst other expedients for these classes I am of opinion that to teach them to sing would be very useful, if we only take care that the words of the music are appropriate and have a tendency to counteract their state. Which of us does not remember that sometimes when besetments have assailed us, a few lines of poetry, (perhaps a stanza of Watt's children's hymns.) have suddenly crossed our minds, and been a means under providence towards our relief. "Music," said Dr. T. Moore,\* "is an old remedy, which like many others that have been thrown

\* See Lancet, Vol. ii. page 397.

aside, might in many cases be employed with advantage. Every one must have experienced its influence in soothing or exciting the feelings and withdrawing the mind from painful recollections. In some stages of fever, and in many nervous diseases, I have no doubt it would be highly useful, and it would often succeed in procuring sleep when narcotics fail."

As regards the management of the violent, it would seem, by the reports of some asylums, that they have laid aside all mechanical apparatus of restraint to the body. But in still advocating its use, I hope I shall not be understood as wishing to inflict the least pain or inconvenience upon any of my fellow creatures, which can be avoided, consistent with their own or others' safety. I am of opinion, that in the best conducted asylums, with ever so efficient a staff of attendants, cases will occur, in which the wisest and kindest part we can act is to apply some means of what is termed personal mechanical restraint. I have known many cases, where the determination to injure themselves or others, or to destroy property, has continued so long, and been so desperate, as to wear out the muscular powers and patience of the strongest and meekest attendants. Again, cases not unfrequently occur, wherein the state of bodily disease or general weakness is such, that it seems best to keep the patient in bed, yet his determination to be up is so strong, that it braces up his muscular powers with a kind of spasmodic throe, sufficient for him to rise, and then as quickly to fall; so that he would be bruised to an extent, which, if it did not cause death, would greatly accelerate it. The idea of the attendants with their hands holding such patients, cannot, I think, be wise. After all, it is personal restraint, and a source of continued irritation to both parties; and to have padded walls appears to me equally preposterous, for without enormous expense the padding would become so filthy as to be intolerable. I do not wish in the least to offend those of an opposite sentiment, or damp the ardour of any philanthropic spirit, who is engaged in the noble enterprise of trying to mitigate human suffering, yet I hope they will bear with me in stating, that I believe they are mistaken. One reason of their having being able to carry out what is

called the non-restraint system so far as they have done, is because of improvement in our social condition, and in the better training of the mass of the people; which has tended to alter the development or phase of the complaint. Were we again to degenerate into a bull-baiting, dog-fighting, pugilistic community, I believe we should again have more abundance of desperate cases, as well as again go the round of all the past cruelties inflicted on the insane.

Perhaps it may be objected to the using of apparatus during the paroxysms, that "the irritated rebound of an insane mind cannot be crushed, it must be evaded and diverted."\* That it must be *diverted*, I grant, and it is frequently right to *evade* it. For instance, I once had to repair some wood-work which a patient had destroyed, and as it was inconvenient to take him out of the room, and as the paroxysm had subsided, and moreover, as he and I had always been on very friendly terms, it was considered safe for me to go and proceed with the repair. So I went, locked myself up with him, and as I proceeded with the work, we conversed cheerfully together for an hour or more; when all at once without any previous indication, he declared he would fight me, and pulled off his coat for that purpose. "Pooh! nonsense!" said I, smiling, "I am not at all fond of fighting." He said, "he did not care," as he clenched his fists in my face, "he would try me." "Well," said I, "if we must fight, there will be more room in the court;" so unlocking the door, and pointing for him to go through the passage, as I laughingly kept my eye fixed upon his, I went on to say, "I am a scienced man, having learned the art; so just go out, and wait in the court until I come." "Wait until thou comes," said he eagerly, half laughing, though I could see that anger was still predominant, "perhaps it will be a long time first?" "Indeed it will," said I, "for I have learned better than to fight if I can avoid it." With that he laughed outright as he clashed to the door (thereby again locking us in), and reiterated my expressions—"a scienced man, indeed!—learned the art, indeed!—wait in the court!—a pretty thing!—ha! ha! ha!" With that I again commenced a conversation as

\* See Lincoln Asylum Report, 1849.

if nothing had occurred, which continued until I had finished my work, and I left him in a cheerful mood.

Though in the foregoing case, I had the presence of mind both to divert and evade, yet to evade sometimes seems impossible. For though, we may often know that for the time being we have a dangerous patient to deal with, because as a rule, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" yet sometimes the attendant finds himself weak-handed with a strong patient whose violent paroxysm is commencing without the usual previous indication; and thus taken by surprise it will sometimes require great moral courage for the mind of the attendant to be sufficiently calm, to work out momentarily the best mode of counteracting the threatened assault. As a last resource the attendant should always have either a shrill whistle or other mode of quickly calling more assistance.

I remember referring to these difficulties and dangers, on conversing with one of the committee of an asylum who was advocating non-restraint. He replied, "that if they hired attendants they should expect them to do as they were told; for, supposing a man entered the army he went with the full knowledge that he was liable to be killed." I confess such a cold calculation was fit to make me shudder. I thought the best cure for those who had such views, would be for them to become attendants for a few months amongst some such cases as I have seen, where the herculean strength seemed almost unearthly, where strong bedsteads, &c., which were screwed to the floor, were torn up and broken to pieces; so that one was reminded of Sampson and the gates of Gaza; and while destruction of property was thus going on, perhaps three or four shrewd and courageous attendants were kept fairly at bay. With all due deference to those who would call me cruel, I should recommend any plans or apparatus by which the patient can be pinned in such case, and so kept until the violence of the paroxysm be subsided. But no doubt such apparatus is most to be preferred, which, being sufficiently preventive for the cases, also combines most ease and convenience to the patient, and will be better still in proportion as it can be so simpli-

fied, that the risks of hurting or being hurt, shall be less during the process of application.

But sometimes to evade would not be right. For instance, I was once placed in a dilemma by a patient with a question, to which if I had answered yes, it would have been not only feeding his delusion, but it would have been a falsehood; if I had evaded by not answering, it would have shown want of moral courage, and I should have lost moral power over him. So, as quick as thought I answered, no; and, as I rather expected, as quickly received a blow on the face, which caused a black eye. I turned away without showing any resentment, and when I again visited him, there appeared an evident change for the better; for, without any allusion on my part, he readily blamed himself, and expressed sorrow at having caused me pain; from which I was persuaded that in this case I had pursued the right course. As to the black eye, we should always be willing not only to "buy the truth," but also to pay for it too.

Though "the irritated rebound of an insane mind cannot be crushed" by man, yet, in many cases, the first indication of recovery is just at the moment when it feels itself overcome, and it is frequently our duty to bring about that crisis. That such crisis may sometimes be brought about by manœuvre, I grant; but then, it must be akin to the guile by which the apostle caught the Galatians, it must be of an innocent kind; and, moreover, the patient must be prevented from perceiving the plot, or the spell will be broken.

It would give a positive advantage to some patients, in following their propensities, if they were aware, that whatever mischief they did, no apparatus would be applied. There are others, again, whose destructive impulses are strong, who yet are conscious of their state, and so dread the idea of being carried away in their apparently ineffectual struggles against their propensities, that it is a relief to them to be put under such restraint during the paroxysm; and many have expressed thankfulness, when it is passed, that they have been prevented doing mischief. It is easier to imagine than describe the feelings of a patient, who, "when he came to himself," and made enquiry for his clothes, was in-

formed, that he had destroyed them all. "Ah!" said he, with tears starting in his eyes, and a countenance that bespoke excessive emotion of anguish and sorrow, "*why did you not prevent me?*"

Should the propensity for mischief appear strong, and there be a probability of the paroxysm being rather long continued, to anticipate a protracted struggle, I should certainly recommend, that a sufficient number of the attendants proceed to put on such apparatus as the case seems to require, as calmly, and with as few words as possible during the process. At such times words will seldom avail for good, and if we cannot soothe or allay, we should be particularly careful not unnecessarily to irritate; for neither by words or gestures ought it to be in the least implied, that we have any intention of *mastering* or *punishing* him, but we should simply strive to give the impression, that it is our painful duty thus to assist him to *control himself* during his extremity. But the patient should in no case be left without the company of one or more of the attendants during the time that the apparatus remains on. Such means should be used as far as our tact, ingenuity, and circumstances will admit to *divert* his mind from *himself*. He may be walked into the airing-court, or after throwing on a cloak or cape to prevent the apparatus being seen (so as to allay, as much as possible, any feelings of indignity or degradation), he may be taken into the gardens, or work-shops, or school-rooms, where the rest of the patients are busy; or a drive may be taken round the grounds; or, if a quick succession of fresh objects is not too much for his state of mind, the drive may be extended a little way into the country. But especial care should be taken all the while, without annoying him, to observe the time when he relents. Then is the time to try to impress upon him the folly of his conduct, and to encourage him with the hopes that he may yet be enabled to conquer it; and, as he now begins to give evidence that he will try, and as we have no desire to give unnecessary pain or inconvenience, we are willing to release him. But some say, "we cannot reason with the insane." I can only answer, that of the nineteen years during which I have been among them as carpenter, for fourteen years of the time the necessary

repairs threw me into immediate and almost daily contact with all the cases of the institution; and, after close observation, I have come to the conclusion, that the greater part of the art of curing the insane consists in reasoning them out of their unreasonableness. But reasoning does not consist in words only, but also in actions; nay "actions speak louder than words." Though we cannot drive them, yet we may often lead them. Though we cannot *crush* "the irritated rebound of an insane mind," and, unless we allow the plea of ignorance, I should consider it impious to attempt it; yet we may endeavour to point it to a Higher Power, and may strive to lead it to "the stone which the builders rejected, the same" which "is become the head of the corner." Though the prospect may often be dreary and cheerless, though our efforts may again and again be baffled and seem in vain, yet we must persevere—we must "hope on, hope ever;" for I have seen such cases of recovery as ought to prevent us ever giving up in despair. Cases occur that have almost been thought hopeless, when the attendants have been unexpectedly cheered at finding that words or acts which transpired, perhaps, months before, have been influencing for good, though forgotten by those around until thus accidentally brought to mind.

Though the application of straps, strait-waistcoats, &c., has been often so freely condemned, yet I consider a practice which still prevails perhaps more or less in most asylums, of far worse consequence to the insane than all such ligatures. I mean that of shutting up the patient alone in an unfurnished room. It will ever be found to be a truth, that "it is not good that the man should be alone;" for as God made, and designed man a social being, it is our duty perseveringly to retain him as such; and if we presume to thrust him from our presence, even only for a few hours, we have no right to be surprised at the consequences which may, and do sometimes result. If we wish the mind of the patient to break down, and become a complete chaos or wreck; or if we wish it to learn, or be confirmed in misanthropy, I do not know anything so effectual as solitary confinement. Can we think that there is anything in a desolate room, likely to "divert" the mind from recoiling upon

itself, and grinding itself to pieces; or can we think that the patient will ever get well, while he is staring at vacancy and the bare wall? For as the strong stool on which he sits, is still more strongly screwed down to the floor, so is he rivetted, and spell bound with the confused panorama, or horrid phantasmagoria, which appears to his mind's eye. But should there be much stamina of mind left, he will probably, for want of better employ, begin to plot mischief or revenge, as he paces the wilderness of a room, at double quick time, and when he has concocted his schemes, more or less deep according to his capacity, he will conceal them under the garb of a hypocritical calm, on purpose to put the attendants off their guard, so that opportunity may occur to execute his intentions. What part of the act of thrusting the patient into the room, is likely properly to *divert* the current of his thoughts from the disturbing cause? Do we wish to influence his mind to a greater degree of moral fortitude and endurance, to more patience and resignation? Does not the act imply, we have none left ourselves? Do we wish to inspire him with hope? Could we use more emphatic language to tell him that we had lost all hopes of him, and as *we* gave up in despair, he might do so too, for ought more we should do as regards the contrary; forgetting that his impatience may be so intense, or his confusion so great that he has lost all power of calculating time, so that every moment he is thus confined in such a dreadful state seems an age. It requires large overflowings of the grace of God, for even a strong mind, to bear solitary confinement with patience and resignation. "If we are not mad before we are put into those rooms," said a patient of my acquaintance, "we shall be before we come out, for the horror of mind I have endured in them, is more than tongue can utter. I can only compare it to a foretaste of hell." We may catch some glimpse of the thoughts that are likely to arise, by noting the words of De la Tude on entering the Bastille, before the French revolution. "When I heard the double doors shut upon me a second time, casting my eyes round my habitation, I fancied I now saw the extent of all that was left to me in this world, for the rest of my days. Besides the malignity of enemies, and the



anger of a minister, I felt I ran the risk of being forgotten, the fate of many who have no one to protect them, or who have not particularly attracted the attention of the public. Naturally fond of society, I confess I looked forward to an abyss of lonely wretchedness, which I thought awaited me, with a degree of horror that cannot easily be described. I even regretted now what I had formerly considered as the greatest blessing, a healthy constitution that had never been affected by disease." If one, with a tolerable balance of mind, felt such horror in solitary confinement, what are we to conceive of the horror of those whose feelings are perhaps still more acute, without any of the balancing regulators; and whose every reflection, so far from assisting them to bear it, tends rather to add to their aggravation? Were I one of the committee of management of an asylum, and the superintendant made frequent use of the seclusion rooms, I should think him not qualified, and hint about looking out for another; for if he did not, or could not use his faculty of invention, for expedients of a positive kind towards a remedy, it would be my duty to prevent him falling back upon what I considered, in a great majority of cases, worse than a negative.

Those who undertake the care of the insane should strive to attain a large amount of that charity which "suffereth long and is kind," which "hopeth all things, endureth all things." But they will also require a large amount of firmness; and though they should always feel sympathy, so that as a rule "to him that is afflicted pity should be shewn from his friend," yet it would sometimes seem requisite to play a kind of double part; for in some cases, it would overwhelm the patients if they knew we pitied them. The following incident will illustrate my meaning. A suddenly bereaved widow had to give evidence touching the death of her husband, and the coroner, in rather sharp accents, told her to stand there and answer the questions. She proceeded tolerably well, until one of the jurymen allowing an expression of pity to escape, the poor woman swooned and had to be carried out. During her absence, the coroner said, perhaps he pitied her as much as any of them, but being aware she had a painful duty to per-

form, he thought it best to divert her attention a little from herself; for so long as she thought him a rough unfeeling man, she hardened herself, and proceeded with her evidence, but the moment she found she was pitied she broke down. Was not the results somewhat similar in the case of Job? For though no doubt, his three friends really spoke as they felt, having as it would seem by their rebukes, mistaken the cause of his complicated afflictions, so that they "imagined to reprove the words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind;" yet, the long controversy which ensued, appears to have been amongst the causes, which, in the over-ruling of providence, tended towards his recovery. In his eagerness to controvert what was false in the argument of his opponents, he seems in part to forget his own afflictions, and the energy of his mind, appears to have aroused the latent powers of the restorative principle, as regards the functions of the body, so that it began to resume its former healthiness.

The committee of management, and superior officers\* of asylums, should not forget to extend care upon the immediate attendants, that they be not oppressed, either bodily or mentally; for on their being in tolerable health, and their minds free from too much harrass, depends a great deal as regards their influences over the patients for good; and there should be a ready response on the part of those over the attendants to assist, encourage, and strengthen them, in the manifold straits and difficulties which are continually arising. There should also be a sufficient number of attendants to allow of a change, sometimes of duties, and sometimes for recreation, especially with those who have the care of the worst patients; for the mind of man is so constituted, that there are tendencies which are not for good, if it is continually in contact with some cases of insanity. We cannot expect the mind of an attendant, who is continually amongst the worst cases, to keep so nicely balanced as not either to become hardened and to some

\* I use the term "superior officers," because it is now used to distinguish the superintendent and others who may be above the immediate attendants; but it is far from being a happy expression. Sensitive patients and some attendants think it gives too much the idea of an army.

extent cruel, or to allow his sympathy to carry him away until he is enervated, or else to lose some control over the imitative propensity so that to some extent he becomes insane himself. To counteract these tendencies the scene should occasionally be changed.

All institutions for the insane should have a good cultivated farm, or what would be still better, the whole to form a well cultivated garden; and though a little pleasure ground may be all very well, yet much is not only expensive to keep in order, but the patients soon tire of the sameness. The generality of them prefer strolling over a pasture amongst the sheep, &c., or to walk in the gardens, where there is more change, than to "go along the gravel walks of the pleasure grounds as precise as so many monks and nuns," as I have heard them say. As to the house, it should as much as possible have the appearance of a lodging house at a watering place, and for the rich, should, as regards convenience and accommodation, somewhat suit the rank of life the patient moved in. As regards the poor, it is evident the establishment must be above what they have been used to, or it could not be carried on. But yet I am no advocate for both poor and rich being in the same establishment; for however it may be thought the poor are accommodated at less cost, unless we could ensure perfection in the officers and attendants, many little things will keep arising to mar the good working. Though it is natural, and would be wrong to discourage any little intimacies which may arise, yet if they approach at all towards favouritism, the attention to one party will consequently cause a neglect of the other, and should be by all means discountenanced.

Whatever may be the arrangement of the different wards of an asylum, the less, as a rule, the doors are locked, at least during the day, and the less irritation will arise to the inmates. But then, it is evident that the boundary of the estate should have a secure wall or fence to prevent escapes, and any weak points, or convenient places, as far as circumstances will admit, might have cottages erected thereon for the families of some of those employed about the estate. This would have the advantage of being not only a kind of watch-tower, but also the patients, as they advanced towards conva-

lescence, would feel the benefit of being allowed to visit such families occasionally; thus preparing them towards facing the world again after their discharge.

As regards the classification, I am inclined to favour the experiments that appear to be in progress in the Lincoln Asylum. For without saying that we can do without some system of classifying, yet the remaining instincts of the inmates should be studied, and, so long as they tend to good, or have not an immoral tendency, they may be humoured; and then it will be found that, to some extent, they will classify themselves with such others as they feel most at home with, and from whose company, unless for good reasons, they should be given to understand they will not be removed by the attendants unless for misbehaviour. Again, by such management the influence of the attendants will better work out the general good, as well as be a check to each other as regards the contrary.

I have no wish to enter much into detail, but I will just state, that it often seems requisite to set one propensity of the patient to counteract another; and it seems difficult for the habits of the attendants to be so fixed as to go on with their routine of duties, and yet hang so loose as to be able to take advantage of every opportunity in which a little variation might tend towards the patient's restoration. There is little doubt, that there is often sufficient left of the seeming wreck whereon to re-build and again restore the vessel, if we could but keep sufficiently alert, and were determined to persevere.

A serious difficulty arises in the right management of the insane from the fact, that amongst them are all shades of character, from those who may have led an almost innocent life to the most depraved of our race. And from the fact of there being, at the same time, a complication of reason and unreason in such a variety of combinations, which gives it such a mixed character that it requires not only great patience and perseverance, but great skill, in order to encourage and strengthen the one, and at the same time weaken and discourage the other.

Another difficulty is, that although employment, in some way or other, is a grand means of diverting the

perturbed mind from the disturbing cause, and placing it in a better position to receive good moral impressions, yet it is astonishing what tact is often required to induce the patients to employ themselves. "I have no occasion to work here; my board and lodging are paid for," says a patient who is asked to do a little. "I have worked very hard," says another, "and I don't see that I fare any better, or am thought any better of, than so and so, who are so idle that they won't work at all." Now, it should be borne in mind, that reward sweetens labour, and it seems in justice due to the patients that there should be some remuneration, either a little better diet, or more liberty, or in some cases a little pocket money, or an account kept of the value of the work, so that the patient may have it on being discharged; or some other equivalent, as the case may be. A stout patient, weighing fourteen or sixteen stones (14lbs. to the stone), rises abruptly from a very hearty dinner of the best roast beef, and in his rage, with meat yet in his mouth, utters imprecations against everything and everybody, and is ready to do battle with any one who comes in his way. Now, what harm would arise, if, in trying to make him more thankful, he were restricted a little in his diet? He is lazy in his habits, and his over-feeding tends to make him still more so. I should set his voracious appetite to help to overcome his idleness; for, no doubt, long before his diet was restricted, either in quantity or quality, to that minimum at which health could be maintained, he would desire more food. I would then set him something to do, and give him to understand that I should not allow more food until he had done it. See that patient with the book; at present he seldom speaks. He is an inveterate reader, and overloads his mind with more than it can digest. According to the routine of his complaint, in two or three weeks he will begin to be talkative, and he inflicts on all who pass a lot of absurd and shallow schemes. He is going to get rich—he is going to feed the pigs on sawdust or small coal, or he has got some mechanical invention equally preposterous, or he is going to strike off an immense quantity £50 bank notes, and so be rich at once. In a little while after, he begins to be violent, which may last some weeks, and then his

disease gradually subsides into a state of melancholy and deep despair, from which in a month or two he gradually emerges, and again commences his reading. Now, this is just the time, in my opinion, to commence the chief attack upon his disorder. I should tell him, that I would only allow him a book in proportion as he made himself otherwise useful, and so try to divert his mind to other things, and then his reading would not have such an injurious effect. Doubtless he would soon storm at me; but that I should consider to be a breaking in upon the former routine of his complaint, and therefore an improvement; and if I kept firm to my purpose, I have no doubt but amendment would ensue.

Yon patient in the workshop is a very different case. He has done a great deal of work, and is now on the list for discharge. He is getting fat; but when he came a few months ago, he was a poor, emaciated, melancholy looking object, in the depth of despair, with strong suicidal propensities. Now that he has recovered, he has given us a short history of his life, from which we gather that he has been always of a weakly constitution, and had been put to a trade which required great muscular exertion. As he was expected to do as much work as his fellow-workmen, many of whom were of robust frame, he frequently felt himself upset; though sometimes he could outstrip them when it happened to be lighter work and required a little ingenuity. But he had been troubled with pains in the chest for four or five years, his family was increasing, and of course, their wants were becoming more numerous, when his health seemed to decline so that he was in danger of losing his situation altogether, because of his inability to attend regularly to it. He had a strong affection for his family, and was willing to do anything for them. Indeed, he prided himself upon being able to keep them decent and respectable with his own earnings; but, when his health began to decline, he imagined they would all come to want, and this thought worked him up to such a pitch of feeling, that he entertained the horrid idea of either killing them to prevent their starving, or committing suicide to prevent his seeing their misery. He seemed to become still more melancholy for the first

few weeks after being brought here ; but the attendants of the ward were indefatigable in their attempts to take every opportunity which they thought prudent to counteract his despondency, though he evinced a great deal of perverseness and self-will. In time they managed so far to ingratiate themselves, that he not only began to feel their kindness, but seemed willing to return it. When one of them ventured to ask him to do a few jobs for them, "Ah," said he, "it is very wrong of me to be so long idle here, when my family are starving at home." After he commenced doing a little, he improved so much, both in body and mind, that a few work tools were procured, and he was set to work in the institution at his own trade. He now began to work so hard that there was a fear of his again oversetting himself ; but, when asked to desist, he would say that, "when at work he felt better, for what he was doing kept wicked thoughts away." It was remarked to him that such is no doubt true, but, as he got no remuneration, there was no need for him to continue at it for so many hours together. His reply was, that "he had been kept by them during the time he did no work, and though he did not get paid for it, perhaps it would do some good." But, as it was thought needful that there should be a change, and, as in the course of conversation, it was found that he had learned a smattering of music when a boy, they one day brought him a flute, which seemed to please him, and he afterwards spent an hour or two a day with it, and learned to play several tunes tolerably correct. One time the attendant brought him a fresh tune, "Auld lang syne," thinking to please him ; but the moment he saw it, his bosom heaved with emotion as though his heart would have burst, his countenance changed, and he sobbed as though he would have choked. The attendant, with surprise, asked what was the matter ? As soon as he could speak, he desired to be left alone, saying he would soon be better, and his emotion subsided with a fit of weeping. Though the incident had such an effect upon his bodily health that he was several days before he recovered from the shock ; yet it would seem as if it had been for good, for it was a kind of last breaking up of the complaint, and he has been more cheerful ever since.

He told us afterwards, that he had often heard the song in workshops in which he had wrought, and the tune, perhaps, was rather of a melancholy strain. As he knew the words of the song, they seemed to cause his reflections to revert to his former condition when at home and in tolerable comfort with his family, and as suddenly to compare it with the state he supposed they were now in, as well as his own present condition, and what he had passed through since he left them.

I do not see what benefit can arise by studying in this case whether the weakness of the constitution arose from diseases or accidents to which we are liable whilst children, or whether it was hereditary. The knowledge that our children are liable to be tainted with our diseases may help us to keep within the boundary of the moral and physical laws, but we ought to take higher principles for the motives of our actions. We may, in this case, pass by the fact of his having been put to a trade which required great muscular exertion; for poor people are frequently obliged to put their children to unlikely employments, as they must do something. We may often see weakly men having to earn their bread at a hard-working business, and athletic men with a pen behind their ears, whose strength is scarcely called into action. Respecting the amount of work which masters require from their workmen, that is caused by the eagerness to get rich, and by the desperately keen competition which has of late years prevailed, part of which competition is caused by laws such as the corn laws were, which throw the trade of a country into the hands of a set of wild and gambling speculators, instead of allowing the honest merchant to see his way before him as he steadily plods on.

But, I consider, the main reason of this patient's being in such a deplorable state was owing to false moral training. Certainly, it was praiseworthy to be wishful to "provide things honest in the sight of all men;" but, having done his best, he should have left the rest. He should not have been too anxious or too impatient; for there might have been some one after a while ready to help him a little. We read, it is "more blessed to give than to receive;" yet he should have considered that the inference of the text is, that it is



blessed to receive also, if it be accepted with a thankful heart. Had he been more patient, who knows but eventually an easier situation might have turned up, in which to earn a livelihood.

I need not dwell longer on this case to show how, by false reasoning and true data, and sometimes, perhaps true reasoning and false data, he had still more increased the confusion of his ideas. I will only add, that, in thus reviewing it, I have no wish to blame him; for, very probably, if I had been in the same position, I should have shown quite as little moral courage and resignation as he, and, perhaps, quite as little faith in the promise, thy "bread shall be given" and thy "water shall be sure."

To me it appears that we shall be enabled to cure the insane, in proportion as we ourselves come under the influence of Him, to whom was delivered "the book of the prophet Esaias, and when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

In thus presuming to place before the reader a few thoughts resulting chiefly from my own observation I should be glad if they should furnish a clue for exploring still further, this (to human capacity) interminable labyrinth. But I should be sorry if, by following what I have hinted, any should be led to false conclusions. I have read but few works on the subject; but I was impressed with the idea, that without saying there was too much stress upon the medical view of the disease, there was sadly too little upon the moral view. I had proceeded thus far with my little adventure when a kind acquaintance lent me some numbers, of the "Journal of Psychological Medicine," and I was agreeably surprised to find, that the Editor took higher, and as I think more correct views. I was not aware, when penning my thoughts, that I should be able to strengthen my position, by quoting from such an authority. At page 226, No. 2, April 1848, the editor says "Every

madman is morally insane, because if his morals were sound, he would not be insane." But some may say, if that is true, all who become insane have themselves to blame. I answer precisely so to some extent; it may be much, or it may be very little, and blame may also attach to parents for wrong training. Blame also attaches, and that frequently to a very great extent, to others, indeed, to the community at large, in the rupture, or bad working of the social machine; much of which bad working is again caused by the bad laws of a country; which are not made by wise and just men, but by the ignorant, the designing and wicked, and which interfere with and circumvent the wise and divine laws of an Almighty Providence, so that the natural and inherent rights of man are thrown into confusion.

Great responsibilities rest with legislators for so much of the laws of a country as are not according to true principles; because so far as they derange the working of the social machine they are amongst the tendencies to drive the people mad. Laws should be so framed as to interfere no more than is actually necessary with commerce and civil and religious liberty. According to my views, the simple duties of governments are to protect life and property, and to prevent one man encroaching upon the rights of another, even though it should be to obtain his own rights: I think all else foreign to their duties.

Government ought to be in a position to stay reckless stock jobbing, and such gambling speculations as were practised during the late railway mania, and all the base arts of raising and depreciating the price of shares. Do we not see how the people were fleeced and ruined by being tempted to leave their honorable, because honest, avocations to stake their all, yea more than their all, upon the chance of the throw of that which was nothing better than a loaded dice? Sad has been the wreck of worldly prospects and consequent horror of mind to thousands of families, widows, and children. Those who get rich by such diabolical arts must have their conscience seared as with a hot iron, or they could not look with such complacency upon the overwhelming destruction, or behold the insane asylums

which they have helped to fill, or the numbers of graves they have caused to be dug.

Religion is often blamed for causing people to become insane. True religion leads to the very contrary; it is the climax of sanity; but by wrong training, the prejudices of the world, and the depravity of our own hearts, we are liable to make mistakes about religion which may cause confusion of ideas until insanity is produced. If we turn to what is called the religious world shall we find a religion, as promulgated by the Almighty, with a path that wayfaring men though fools shall not err therein? Do we not rather see something in the name of religion crammed so full of perplexing questions that it requires a bright intellect to be able to detect the error from the truth? Do we not see one portion of the community assuming an authority over the rest, forgetting that from Cain and Abel down to this day, any brothers would quarrel if one presumed to force the other respecting religion or its maintenance? All such things should be avoided if we wish to preserve the sanity of the people. Our laws respecting religion let in such a flood of corruption, and cause such an abuse to be perpetrated in the name of religion that the minds of the people are confused and their moral feelings outraged. Can we wonder if any one in the least inclined to scepticism should turn away in disgust and say that religion is all a sham, an engine for political intrigue, set a going by statecraft and priestcraft for their own mutual emolument, and that with such thoughts he should launch into the deep and muddy sea of infidelity, and, in spite of a conscience he cannot calm which still calls him back, his determined self-will should urge him on until the struggle, the emotion, and agitation of feeling be so intense that his insanity should burst forth in its worst, most dangerous, or violent forms?

Then, in the struggle which we individually experience between the material and the spiritual, do we not take the first step towards insanity when we decide to follow that which is earthly at the risk of losing that which is heavenly? Do we not rivet the chain which entangles us in proportion as we prefer the present to the future? Do we not become spell-bound, or terrified into confu-

sion, because of our continual disappointments in search after temporal happiness? In such case our faith is so weak that we have no strength to cast the anchor of hope into sure anchorage ground, and so be able to ride out the storm and fix our eye upon the star which appears to guide us to a haven of safety and true rest, and a happiness which is eternal.

I have understood that some say insanity increases as civilization advances. If so, some part of our civilization must be false. Perhaps our manners and customs are more complex, and therefore tend more to the disease than those of more primitive times, or in what is called savage life, where the customs are more simple. But I think, if we had means of ascertaining we should find that there were more cases of insanity, in proportion to the community, during the middle ages, when so much superstition prevailed, than there are now. The laws of a country have great influence over the manners and customs of a people, and it would be a wise act of our legislators, and tend no little towards establishing the sanity of the nation, if they were to strike out a great number of laws and remodel others, so as to make them more simple and easy to be understood. The French are not the only people whose excitement has amounted to what may be termed national temporary insanity, the awful effects of which might have been prevented if there had been a code of wise laws administered with justice. But when we make laws for the management of the insane we should take especial care not to run too much into detail. They should be indications, rather than laws; for the only law which can be brought fully to bear upon the question is the law of love—true christian charity.

As an instance of our proneness to interfere unnecessarily, and unnaturally with the social compact, by law making, in the same number of the "Journal" from which I have just quoted, at the conclusion of some remarks "on the hereditary transmission of insanity," the author desires that government should pass laws for the prevention of the marriage of the insane. He admits, that "by crossing of the members of different families in marriage, the disposition may be obliterated as it may likewise be continually strengthened by mar-

riages in the same race or family ;” and though “certain rules do not, however, appear admissible, with respect to the capacity for the transmission of insanity ;” yet he concludes, “all that the state can do is to establish a law to prevent insane persons from contracting marriages and thus perpetuate disease.” Surely, governments have already assumed too much of the prerogative which belongs to God alone, without further outraging humanity. Have we not seen governments overturned one after another in consequence of such presumptuous intermeddling ? But, in my opinion, if such a law were passed it would throw society into such confusion, that the government which passed it would soon be swept away as with a whirlwind. Where would they draw the line of demarcation ? All mankind are more or less tainted with insanity, and have been ever since the fall of Adam ; our Redeemer is the only exception. Then governments, as such, have no right to interfere, to prevent marriages ; and as to individuals or relatives, the case would have to be very decided before reason justified them in interfering further than by persuasion. Though I should not encourage the marriage of the insane, yet so far from “forbidding to marry,” in many cases, I think, it would help no little towards their cure to “let them marry.” But it is a duty devolving upon the community to see to the welfare of such individuals and their offspring ; for, though the seed of insanity appears to be inherent in man, yet, we might do a vast deal more towards preventing its full developement, if we did but commence early enough, and persevere with right training.

In concluding these remarks, I may be permitted to ask—Is not the pride of the human heart the moving cause of insanity ? I only ask the question ; for I feel aware that, on this part of the subject, I am liable to be thought too severe upon the afflicted. We see a certain course of action in an individual which we do not approve ; surely we may try to search out the first moving cause without it being said, that we are condemning the individual ; for we shall often find, that others have been to blame in causing him to be in his present condition. If we could analyse the cases of insanity, perhaps we should find that *dread* or *fear* is always a component of

the disease, and sometimes to a great extent. But, if we were all willing to hearken to and obey the "voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him," we should soon find that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

"Ye believe in God," said our Saviour. Yes, if we are honest with ourselves, we shall all find that we believe in God, else how are we to account for the qualms of conscience when we disobey his moral laws? Why such a fearful looking for of judgment? Do we not see then, that if we take up with our Redeemer's second postulate, "believe also in me," that he would forgive us, take away our sins, and, as a true Physician, heal all our *spiritual maladies*?

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMITTEE OF VISITORS  
OF THE  
**LUNATIC ASYLUM**  
FOR THE  
*North and East Ridings of Yorkshire.*

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HAVING read with interest your report for 1850, perhaps it may not be intrusive for one in the humbler walks of life to offer a few observations thereon, especially as the management of the insane is a subject which concerns all classes—the poor as well as the rich, the little as well as the great.

And I may here observe, that on perusing this report of the Asylum which is under your supervision, I have been struck with the evident desire of the Superintendent, in the working of his plans, to seek the good both of the patients and of the establishment; and it must be a gratifying result of such care that a comparison of the admission of patients with those discharged, shows that no fewer than about 60 per cent were cured.

At page 10 the Superintendent says, “In many cases insanity produces a flag in the constitutional powers, requiring a generous diet and often stimulating beverages.” We find many who have had the care of the insane come to the same conclusion, and I have no doubt but the position is, to a great extent, true, and that many cases have been confirmed by having recourse to bleeding and blistering on the first appearance of what is termed insanity; whereas, had they been allowed a due amount, and even what some might think an excess, of generous diet, including in some cases ale, porter, or wine, and paying strict attention to remedy or prevent constipation, at the same time persevering to use all the moral means, which, in their combined judgment, the case seems to require, I have no doubt, that those unto whose care such cases might be confided would often have to

raise their hearts with gratitude to the Most High, that they had been permitted to become instruments in the restoration of their fellow mortals to their right mind ; or at all events, to such a degree that it may be deemed safe and proper for them to leave the asylum, and again become members of the human family. But, though bleeding and blistering will perhaps seldom tend to good while the case is recent, yet, when more confirmed I have fancied I have observed advantage, both medically and morally, on the application of a blister in some cases, as well as in cupping, and the use of a leech or two occasionally. But, as I am only a worker amongst wood, if I leave the chisel and the plane, to try my skill with the lancet and the spatula, perhaps I should soon receive a hint that "the cobbler must not go beyond his last ;" so I wish it merely to be understood, that "a surgeon does not cure diseases as a carpenter mends a roof, but only assists nature in her effort at repair. But, in the treatment of diseases, it is a fact of practical value yet to be learned by many, that chronic diseases require a chronic treatment, and habits of the body, like habits of the mind, are only to be altered by gentle and persevering exertions."\* I assent to this extract so far, that, as a rule, chronic "habits of the mind are only to be altered by gentle and persevering exertions ;" yet I think all must perceive that cases do arise, which for a time cannot be treated very gently. Suppose that a man, in a state of intoxication, commences breaking up the furniture or dealing out personal injury to those around him (and insanity in some of its phases very much resembles intoxication), does not common sense dictate, does not humanity dictate, and, as no doubt it is our duty to be our brother's keeper, does not christianity dictate, that we seize and prevent such a one, though at the risk of not being very gentle with him ? Then, as it would be wearisome and inconvenient to continue such hold ; besides, if we did so, there would be a liability of irritating the feelings of both parties to an extent which would be far from desirable, it

\* See a brief glance at the Medical Art, by James Bower Harrison, Surgeon.—Lancet, vol. 2, page 684.



must, I think, be evident that it is better to use some mechanical contrivance which would answer the end of prevention without the danger of arousing the anger of the care-takers. Then, if the one party seems to know no bounds to the disposition for mischief, the design only failing from the failure of the power; shall we not also, in the means of prevention, allow our ingenuity the full scope of the human powers? At the same time, no doubt, it is our duty to give as little personal inconvenience as possible, consistent with what we wish to prevent; yet where we see a continued plot for evil, there should be a continued counterplot for good.

At page 12 of the report, allusion is made to the good effected by the school. I am of opinion that schools in asylums would be found to be useful levers in trying to restore the balance of the mind; for they not only occupy the mind with an object on which it may repose, but they also tend to throw it back past that time of life (the time of youth) in which a majority of cases seem to date their commencement, or at least a kind of first development; so that the recollections of childhood and the pleasures connected therewith, may, as it were, entice them to begin life again. I am aware it is objected that schools may do in a pauper asylum, but the patients in most others have learned to read and write. The objection is more in appearance than reality; for, though there is no doubt that a difference of education may have given a difference of bias or prejudice, yet not so much as to form an objection; for as human nature is human nature still, the means to bring about the desired end must be the same, and merely varied according to the circumstances of each case. We read of the good resulting from schools, amongst classes which are not paupers, in the reports of both French and American asylums, and it should also be borne in mind, that there are paths of learning upon which the most learned may still proceed.

Whilst upon the subject of schools, there appears a fact in this report which deserves passing notice; it is, the apparent inaptitude of some of the patients

to learn arithmetic. We find many others, as well as patients in asylums, who make progress very slowly in learning the use of figures; but if we used decimals, instead of the present arrangement, in our weights, measures, and money, we could work them without that complicated method—the compound rules—and we should all soon go on much easier than we do in our present mode of calculation.

I am glad to observe, in the report, so much stress laid upon alluring the patients into employment, and that there are such varieties resorted to in your asylum. I am fully of the opinion that employment is the best secondary means of cure which we have at command; the only rest for the mind seems to be in being occupied, in having an object in view; yet there must be a change in it, or it will defeat the desired end, and in changing the object care should be taken that it always tends to good. One great reason of the monotony and listlessness justly complained of in most asylums for the insane, is, that sufficient variety of employment is not provided, nor yet sufficient energy or zeal on the part of the officers or attendants, to entice the patients to employ themselves. I have known and read of many remarkable instances of cure, effected by the persevering energy of those into whose hands the insane have been placed. Passing by those who have been benefitted by employment within the compass of my own observation (and if they were enumerated they would not be few), and passing by such as are alluded to in the reports of various asylums in our own country, and on the continents of Europe and America, I will quote an extract from a paper "On sleep, and its effects on the organised frame," by F. D. Walsh, Surgeon, London.\* "Letting the thoughts flow on without any arrangement seems not to be exercise for the mind, any more than being rocked in a cradle is exercise for the body. Insane patients seem to be injured by reverie, though much benefitted if they employ their thought for some end; the exercise seems to be in the arrangement. When I had charge of insane patients I scarcely ever passed a day without playing at

\* See Lancet, vol 2, page 181.

chess, draughts, or backgammon with insane men, and I believe they were much improved by it; as in a gallery I took charge of in an asylum, every case that came in went out cured, without one exception, with almost no medical treatment at all. But indoors there were always chess, draughts, bagatelle, or some employment or active games, as fives, and what may appear strange, the broad sword exercise. Out of doors there were cricket, bowls, gardening, anything that arouses the mind to take an interest in something, or causes the mind to adapt itself to the external world. For instance, I throw a ball gently to an insane patient, and ask him to catch it; if he does so, there is an exercise of muscular contraction for some end,—the mind adapts itself to external things, and this simple operation is a part of the moral treatment of the insane.”

We may observe in this extract, that the object desired is the same, whether he makes use of profitable employment, such as gardening, or what may be termed unprofitable, such as games. Without condemning cricket, bagatelle, &c, for they are all of use in their places; yet humanity is so constituted that the more we are induced to turn our hand to really useful employment the more real pleasurable sensations will arise. We see, at page 13 of the report, that in playing at games where there is a winning and a losing (though there may not have been any money stakes) there is a liability to “chagrin;” whereas, in useful employment it is all winning, no losing, and therefore no chagrin on that account. But let me not be understood as meaning that the patients should all be employed in hard manual labour; but that all, as far as circumstances will admit, should be enticed into mental and bodily labour of that kind and degree, which we think will tend best to keep them in bodily and mental health.

In reporting the amount of work done by the patients, allusion is made to the happy effect produced by having a hayfield tea party, especially to one patient who was present; which fact is worthy of notice, and corresponds with the experience of the Magistrates of the Lincoln Asylum, as appears from

the following extract, which seems to be in answer to some faultfinding by the commissioners. "Resolved, that the admixture of all classes of patients in taking exercise in the spacious front grounds, has proved highly beneficial, and is not a violation of the general principle of classification. Also that the fact of glazed doors into the respective galleries, confronting each other at a distance of 60 feet, whereby the system of supervision is not, (as asserted by the commissioners,) a virtual admixture of the sexes. That the most ample facilities for the inspection of the asylum by the public, are the only means of preventing abuse, and removing popular prejudices as to the treatment of the insane; that the governors reject any proposal for diminishing public inspection."\*

At page 16, allusion is made to the pleasure some of the inmates manifested at being allowed to nurse the children of a patient or two, whose state of mind required that they should remain in the asylum during their confinement. I think there is no doubt, but that the frequent company of children, both to nurse and to play with, would be of great benefit to the inmates of an asylum, as tending to relax the fixedness of the complaint, by causing them to forget themselves; and seeing that many of them will indulge in looking back, as I said respecting schools, it would tend to throw them in their thoughts still further back upon the days of their own childhood, and so tend to close the chasm through which their flood of distress and confusion has been allowed to flow. At the same time, the experiment would require great care, not so much from the fear of the patients hurting the children physically; but as the imitative propensity of human nature is so very active in children, they might receive mental injury which would again require a deal of counteracting. Perhaps if the same children did not often visit, the danger might be a little obviated.

Whilst alluding to the imitative propensity, I may here state, that I think its powers for good or for evil upon the inmates of asylums are greatly lost sight of. I could mention many cases where the propensity has

\* See Lancet, vol 2, page 600. Lincoln Asylum.

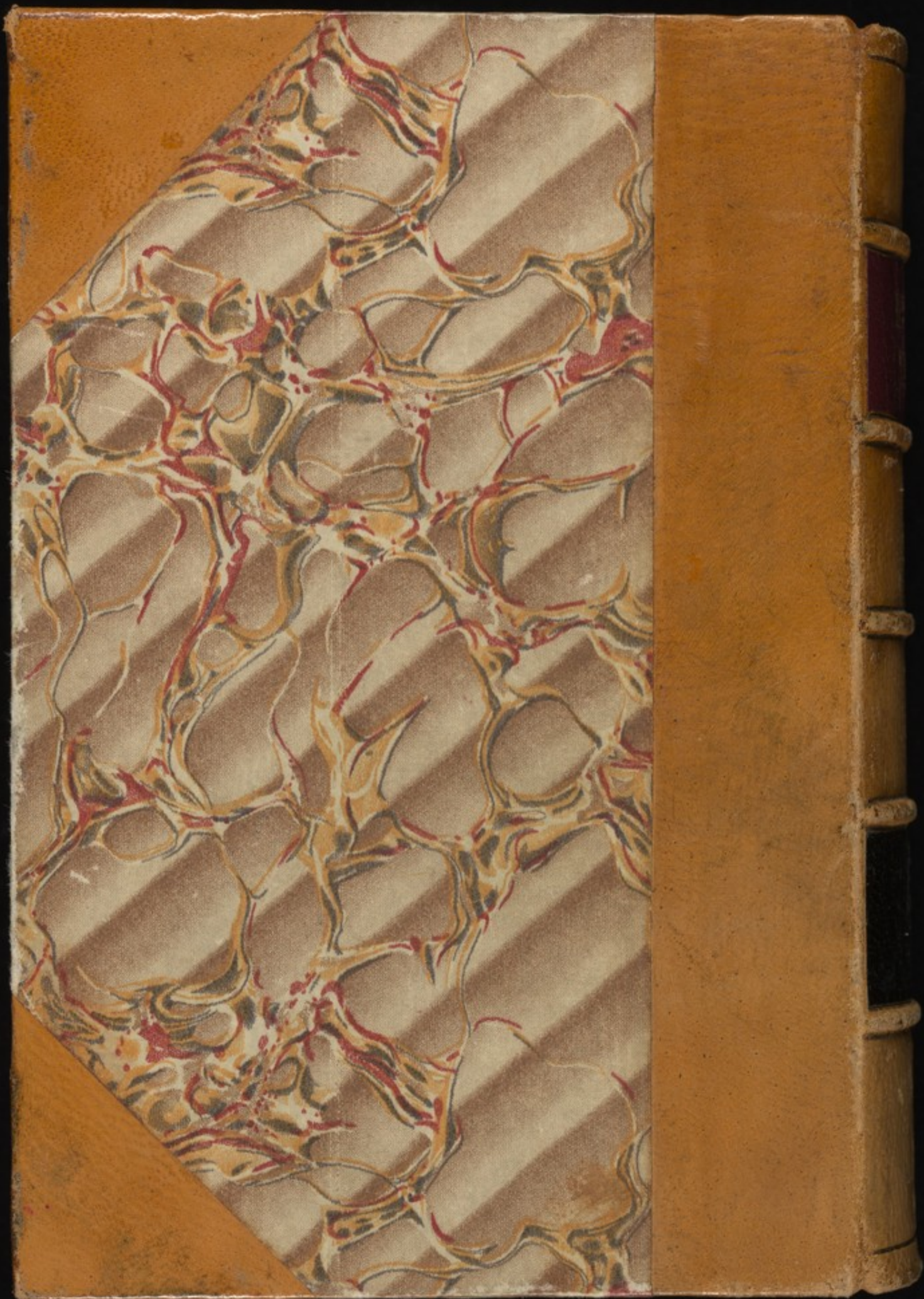
done much mischief by not being duly controlled, or rather from not using proper influence to cause that it should follow good, and not evil examples. For instance, suppose amongst the inmates there is one who from paralysis or other cause, walks lame, or that there are others addicted to swearing, or other propensities which are not good; if a fresh patient in some states of mind is turned among them, there is great probability that in a few days he will begin to walk lame, or to swear, or to follow the example of one or other of those into whose company he is introduced. Or should the case be what is called hypochondriac, with an acute sense of decorum, the effect may be such as to throw him into a state of melancholic despair, from which it will be impossible for man to arouse him. There are indeed some minds whose feelings are so obtuse that they are little or nothing affected on becoming inmates of asylums, yet there are many with acute feelings who are agonized to an indescribable extent when they first enter. Highly favoured is the man to whom is entrusted the message of mercy to such despairing souls, if he can so far fathom their state as to be able to strengthen them with his mouth, and with the moving of his lips to assuage their grief.\* Yes, these are the classes whose chronic habits of mind require to be treated gently and delicately; and who would not covet to be the good Samaritan to pour in the oil and the wine?

Mention is made in the report of the religious services. I much prefer the Retreat plan of reading the Holy Scriptures to the patients, to that of reading the Church of England prayer-book, as more likely to lead the perturbed mind to rest upon that true "Rock of Ages;" which rest, after all that has been said and written upon insanity, constitutes the grand cure; for though really simple and efficient the plan of salvation no doubt is, yet the pride of the human heart, and other evil propensities, more or less strengthened by the prejudice of education, seem so to have mystified it, or so to have blinded our spiritual vision, that we cannot or do not come unto Him, that He may give rest unto our souls. But, in hinting

\* Job.

at unbelief as being a component of the disease, let me not be understood as accusing the afflicted as being more unbelieving than others; for we see many in the world whose life and conversation may be taken as evidence that they are little better than infidels, as regards the truth of the gospel, and are yet retaining a tolerable share of the reasoning faculties. I only desire to shew that in adapting the means of remedy, the proneness of the human mind to unbelief should be sufficiently kept in view.

I congratulate you as regards the financial statement; by which you fully prove that a well organised system of employment for the patients, not only expedites the cure but also tends towards their contentment, so that they are easier controlled. The report likewise shows that it is possible to extend proper care upon this afflicted class, and yet prevent the burthen falling upon the community so heavily as it has heretofore done. That asylums for the insane will never be self-sustaining, must be obvious to all, because on the one hand there will always be many cases that can do little or nothing towards their own support; and on the other hand, without setting it as a test of fitness for being discharged, because there may be exceptions, yet generally speaking, when a patient can continuously employ himself, his state of mind will be such that he may be safely trusted amongst society at large, and it would be unjust to detain him. So, then, though it is a duty to try to ease the public burthen as much as possible, yet I have no doubt but you are aware that in proceeding in that direction it will require great caution; for should there be through inadvertence or other cause, any of the patients overworked, or any of the attendants oppressed, or even should the brain of the superintendant be over-exerted in devising plans, there may be misanthropic spirits in the world, ready to catch at any thing however trifling, to malign the grandest systems or the best institutions.



MEDICAL  
TRACTS

543



Receipts and Expenditure, from December 31st, 1862, to December 31st, 1863.

The Wellcome Library



250	3	0
27	15	11
4	6	0
150	13	0
17	8	3
184	17	2
359	17	2
27	4	10
2,830	7	5
2,789	15	6
378	3	3
58	14	4
1,650	0	0
11	2	11
1,082	17	4
623,037	10	2

MAN, } Auditors,  
W. W. WESSELL,

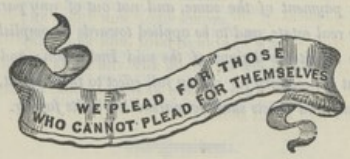


Examined and com

# THE ASYLUM FOR IDIOTS.

INSTITUTED OCTOBER 27, 1847.

INCORPORATED BY ROYAL CHARTER, 1862.



ESTABLISHMENT:  
EARLSWOOD, RED HILL, SURREY.  
OFFICE—29, POULTRY, LONDON, E.C.  
1865.

GEORGE UNWIN, GRESHAM STEAK PRESS, BUCKLEBURY, LONDON.



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