

**An account of the Mission in the Insane Department and Children's Asylum of Blockley Almshouse, Philadelphia : to which are annexed a series of extracts from the letters of physicians in different insane asylums in the United States to the missionary / by Rev. Edward C. Jones.**

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1855

AN ACCOUNT  
OF  
The Mission in the Insane Department  
AND  
CHILDREN'S ASYLUM  
OF  
BLOCKLEY ALMSHOUSE,  
PHILADELPHIA.

*To which are annexed a Series of Extracts from the letters of  
Physicians in different Insane Asylums in the  
United States to the Missionary.*

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BY REV. EDWARD C. JONES, A. M.

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"Then pointing to a shivering band,  
He said, My loved disciples, see,  
Your Lord departs, the poor remain,  
Kindness to them, is love to me."

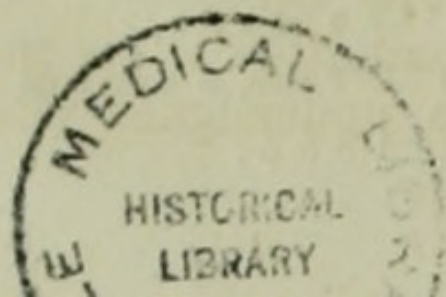
REV. T. H. STOCKTON.

"The poor ye have with you always."

THE SAVIOUR.

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PHILADELPHIA:  
KING & BAIRD, PRINTERS, 9 SANSOM STREET.  
1855.



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## AN ACCOUNT OF THE MISSION.

EARLY in January, 1849, the opinion was expressed by Dr. Benedict, then the Physician-in-chief of the Blockley Almshouse, Philadelphia, that the introduction of religious worship in the Insane department of that building, would be productive of great good in the case of the afflicted patients. The sanative and remedial influences of such services had been fully proved in institutions of a similar character, and it was deemed advisable to test the experiment at home. The effort was at once made, and the undersigned held his incipient service on the last Sunday in January of the year above mentioned. On that occasion about *three hundred patients* with their Nurses and Attendants, convened in a spacious room, and the services of the Sanctuary were performed with great satisfaction and success. These services have been regularly continued on the afternoon of every Lord's day from that period to the present, with undiminished interest and pleasure. The philanthropic citizens of Philadelphia of various creeds, have frequently by their presence cheered the heart of the officiating clergyman, and by expressions of approbation have incited him to renewed endeavours in behalf of those committed to his pastoral supervision. And the undersigned desires in the



summary statement now exhibited, to relate the good results which have flowed from these ministrations, and the system he has adopted for the past six years in a field of labor which has occupied his time and thoughts most unremittingly, and to which he feels himself bound by ties at once sacred and imperative. At about 3 o'clock, on Sunday afternoon, the patients assemble in the chapel in a very orderly and quiet manner, and the exercises are opened by the regular devotional performances of the church, a hymn is then sung, the delivery of a sermon follows, and the exercises are closed with a short hymn and the benediction. There are portions of the service of a responsive character, in which the patients take an active and often intelligent part, while the singing is shared by nearly the whole body of the audience. During the delivery of the sermon the attention is marked and decided and there have been instances where a convalescing patient has taken succinct notes of the sermon and handed them to the preacher, on the termination of the services. In addition to the regular Sunday performances, it was deemed advisable to organize classes for reading, and vocal music through the week as a process of training for the services of the Lord's day. The classes were organized forthwith, and in the lapse of a short time most of the patients attained a creditable degree of proficiency in reading and singing. Such was the interest created that the hour dedicated to this service passed away too rapidly for



the instructor and his docile pupils, and the recurrence of the day was eagerly anticipated by both parties. It may be interesting to the pious heart to know something of the method adopted at these weekly exercises. The undersigned called up a patient and gave him a bible, the other patients being furnished respectively with the same blessed volume. He was requested to turn to the Psalms and read one verse, while the audience in turn were desired to respond. In this way we have read from fifteen to twenty of the Psalms, and the responses have been invariably prompt and full. Then another patient would be called up and requested to announce and read through a designated hymn, which was sung by the entire company. Prosecuting this plan for a long period, quite a number of devotional Psalms were memorized, and a considerable number of hymns also. Thus prepared for the Sunday worship the interest was greater; the minds of the patients were initiated, and the chances of ultimate profit in their behalf, became fixed and determinate. During the past six years the undersigned has often met in the streets of Philadelphia patients, who have been discharged and are now actively employed in the scenes of busy life, who have expressed to him their high sense of the efforts made to ameliorate their condition. Such grateful reminiscences constitute an infallible index of the practical utility of what was once regarded, even by men of sanguine expectation, an effort bordering on the chimerical.



When visitors enter our reception-room, a patient has frequently been known to volunteer his services in relating the pleasing fact (pleasing at least to him) that he has a minister of his own, and goes to church on Sunday. In addition to the previous efforts, the undersigned introduced two small libraries, composed of interesting books for the daily use of the patients. The booksellers of the city with characteristic urbanity furnished him with quite a large number of volumes, and now the visiter upon entering the wards will see neat book-cases filled with instructive volumes, and observe here and there a patient enjoying the luxury of an entertaining book of travels, or a biography, or a choice selection of poetry. The undersigned has ever been anxious to have a small musical instrument introduced which would tend materially to tranquilize the minds of the patients still more, and give greater efficiency and vital power to our regular ministrations. He would also state to those who may read this account that a collection of maps and coloured prints, or engravings would be a desirable acquisition. Sweet sounds and captivating pictorial delineations are alike productive of beneficial influences in the case of the mentally affected. A simple air, and the sight of a painted object, will often break up a train of diseased speculations and divert into a more healthful channel the distempered fancy. It would be easy for many of our philanthropic citizens to deposit with the undersigned any



specimens of mineralogy, or conchology, any maps, pictures, or engravings, which may now be stored away in their houses, subserving no practical purpose, for the standing use and habitual recreation of our patients. The subject has never yet been fully presented to a beneficent public, and the undersigned would here and now assure his fellow-citizens that to no object more worthy could donations of such a description be presented. The Pennsylvania Hospital under the supervision of the distinguished Dr. Kirkbride, has thus been held in remembrance, and the well-stocked cabinet of curiosities is a standing attestation of that native kindness of heart which has ever characterized the inhabitants of the city of Penn. Let us hope for a similar remembrance. The advantages resulting thus from religious worship and its collateral exercises, have been fully evinced during the past six years. We have always quite a number of epileptic patients whose mental faculties are not peculiarly impaired, and who can understand and appreciate such devotional performances. Also we have a number of convalescing patients, in whose case the thick shadows of derangement are gradually dispersing before the returning beam of reason. For such, divine worship possesses an undefinable charm, by its association with their happier days. And even where the mind appears to us in a chaotic condition, we fully believe that the occasions and circumstances of worship call up a temporary



gleam of rationality. In the beautiful language of Dr. Galt of Williamsburg, Va., whose unremitting devotion to the Insane for many years has won for him the greenest wreath of honorable renown. "In Christian lands, few, even if the mind be clouded, by the dark veil of insanity, can ever totally forget the religious teachings and associations of childhood, and early youth, however limited they may have been, and it is doubtless a pleasure to most of the Insane, merely through the great gulf and cloud-land which separates them forever from that sunny time, to receive some faint gleams of early light, to experience again, even though momentarily, faint traces of early feelings." And the undersigned would respectfully add: is it not the duty and the privilege of those whose reason beams with full unclouded ray, to lighten the severe affliction which their suffering fellow-mortals have in God's inscrutable providence been called to bear, by letting them have these "faint gleams and traces" in the exercises of devotion. To their affliction the best-constituted mind is liable, and this consideration alone, should fuse our interests, and make their welfare our own. To this brief account the undersigned would here append a few extracts from letters addressed to him by distinguished physicians in which they assure him of the practical utility and beneficence of his work.



1. FROM DR. BENEDICT,  
*Late Principal of the Utica State Insane  
 Asylum.*

“I am happy to hear of the continuance of your labours, at the Blockley Almshouse. I trust that nothing may interrupt them, and that you may be liberally sustained. I set a high value upon religious instruction for the Insane, believing that, in addition to its salutary moral influence, important scriptural truths may sometimes be received and appreciated by them. Please to accept my best wishes for your success in this missionary field.”

2. FROM DR. KIRKBRIDE,  
*Principal of the Pennsylvania Insane Hospital.*

“I have no hesitation in expressing my belief that your services among the Insane in the Philadelphia Almshouse are very valuable and I should much regret to hear that they had been discontinued. The reading of the Bible to the patients of this Institution has always been practised, and as I believe, with advantage and to their gratification.”

3. FROM DR. CURWIN,  
*Principal State Lunatic Hospital, Harrisburg.*

“From the experience of the last three years here, I have no hesitation in saying that I consider religious exercises, regularly conducted, of



a very decidedly beneficial character in the treatment of the Insane. My best wishes for your success."

2. FROM DR. BUTTOLPH,

*Principal Insane Hospital, Trenton, N. J.*

"I am glad to hear of your labours, and I sincerely hope that you may still continue to be very useful to the Insane, toward whom you may hold the relation of chaplain."

5. FROM DR. CHANDLER,

*State Asylum, Worcester, Massachusetts.*

Aside from whatever there may be promoted in each individual, of religious growth, the daily and weekly ministrations of the Sacred Scriptures to the Insane tend to the moral improvement and good order of the whole establishment. In large hospitals sufficient numbers can be assembled, to compose an audience so large as to recall former religious associations in the minds of the wandering Insane, and thereby to enable them, for the time at least, to make a stronger effect to draw off their thoughts from their delusions. Order and regularity are promoted and the long tedious hours of the wards, are interrupted by the daily services of the chaplain. In a word religious services are among the best moral influences in Asylums for the Insane. Your work is a noble one."

## 6. FROM DR. GALT,

*Insane Asylum, Williamsburg, Va.*

“It may be observed, my dear Sir, that religious services are a portion of the moral treatment of the Insane, with regard to the value of which there is a more general agreement between American Superintendents of Asylums, than takes place with regard to any other point of the moral treatment. How significant and valuable is such a fact !”

The opinions of the secular press are here inserted, not for the purpose of display, but with the simple design of proving the fact that the labors of the Missionary have been appreciated.

*From the Pennsylvania Inquirer.*

We are glad to hear that our respected townsman, the Rev. Edward C. Jones, is still devoting his energies to the moral amelioration of the Insane in the Blockley Almshouse. For six years he has labored in this self-denying and truly philanthropic enterprise, eliciting expressions of respect from many of the distinguished physicians of our country who preside over our State Insane Asylums, and drawing to himself the kind regards of Christians of varying creeds.

*From the Public Ledger.*

The ministerial labors of the Rev. Edward C. Jones have been very successful, and of their



salutary moral influence in the case of the Insane there can be no question. Mr. J. has labored in this connection for six years.

*From the Daily Sun.*

Mr. Jones has been for six years quietly prosecuting his work of pure beneficence. He has chosen a noble field for the exercise of that profession whose crowning attribute it is to minister to a mind diseased.

*From the North American.*

We feel happy to know, that our fellow-citizen, Mr. Jones, is quietly progressing with his good work. Such ministrations must be attended with very sanative effects. We trust he will be liberally sustained in the arduous undertaking, to which he has given six years of effort.

*From Arthur's Home Gazette.*

The Rev. Edward C. Jones has been long and favorably known to many of our citizens for his faithful ministrations among the Insane at Blockley Almshouse. His missions we hope will be generously sustained by the beneficent.

*From the Friend's Intelligencer.*

Our esteemed citizen, Edward C. Jones, has been for some time past favourably known to us by his faithful and praiseworthy endeavors to better the state of the Insane in the Blockley Alms House.



## THE CHILDREN'S ASYLUM.

Coincident with the establishment of Divine worship in the Insane departement, was the mission to the Children's Asylum. It may not generally be known to our fellow-citizens that during the few past years as many as 1500 children have been in the brief space of one year admitted and discharged in this department. What an army of young immortals to be trained up for God and holiness! What a harvest for the spiritual husbandman! What a golden opportunity for the Herald of the covenant to feed his master's lambs, who are soon to leave their quiet pastures and secure retreat, for the rough roadside of the world! For so large a number of children to be regularly brought under the discipline and sanative influence of heaven-descended truth, is an important, vital matter. We may glance at the numerous missionary stations in either foreign or domestic fields, and our eye will light upon none where such an amount of available youthful material awaits the plastic hand of the accredited teacher of Christianity. On every Sunday morning the little congregation assembles to hear a familiar lecture on some scriptural topic. In the early part of the period (six years) during which the undersigned has labored in this connection, he took up what



is known as the Scriptural alphabet (A is for Adam, B is for Balaam, &c.,) and devoted one lecture to the exposition of the narrative, involved in an isolated letter. In this way he employed himself for the first six months. At the end of that time his little flock had a store of interesting Biblical facts, upon which they could stand a highly creditable examination. The undersigned next took up the Lord's prayer, and devoted to its exposition and enforcement, a series of plain sermons, which occupied a period of four months. The remainder of the year was taken up in a detailed review. In this way the commandments, and all the primary and distinctive doctrines of the Protestant faith, have been enforced, and expounded. One of the most interesting course of lectures to the little ones was upon the Sacred Mountains of the Bible. Thus by a proper admixture of doctrine and precept, narrative and belief, the minds of these little ones have been moulded according to the proportion of faith. In vocal music the children have always been well trained. The citizen who visits their play-ground, or their school-room, will catch the blended accents of some sweet little lyric before he crosses the threshold of their beloved home. Recently a committee of gentlemen who had come to Philadelphia from Boston on some business, I think of a political nature, visited our Children's Asylum, and one of them conducted an examination of that portion of their number, who had been longest under relig-



ious training, and he subsequently manifested both surprise and delight at their wonderful proficiency. He said that if a comparison were instituted between that humble school and any Sunday school in our country, the Blockley Almshouse Asylum so far from suffering would, in many cases, be awarded the palm of superiority. In the past six years some thousands of children have sat beneath the voice of the undersigned. And he can conceive of no higher honor than to be held in affectionate remembrance by those dear children, who, deprived of many earthly advantages, have been led to the wells of salvation for refreshment and repose. The portions of scripture—the hallowed psalms—the easily comprehended lyric—the striking anecdote—these may dwell in the memory, and influence their after life, when he is dust who loved them. What element of happiness can be so congenial to the heart of a confiding little child, as the religious element? Poor in this world's goods though he may be, he hears of a dear Saviour who consecrated the condition of penury with its manifold inconveniences; a Saviour, who clasps to his bosom in an intensely-passionate embrace that portion of humanity who are often disregarded—the poor, the lonely and the sorrowing. Such, briefly, is the mission to which the undersigned wishes to devote his energies. He hopes by the general diffusion of this statement to raise up a list of Annual Subscribers among his kind and generous fellow-



citizens. Cannot a list of *two or three hundred* be made up in amounts from *two dollars and upward*, to place this blessed Mission upon a platform of respectability and usefulness? The undersigned is convinced that the beneficent portion of this community need but the presentation of good and important objects for the bringing out of their unstinted sensibilities and patronizing support. And he hopes that the appended testimonials will commend the enterprise to the hearts of all who feel for suffering humanity. To this cause he desires to consecrate his energies. No higher ambition should fill the heart of God's ambassador than to preach the Gospel to the poor. Happy he, who hears at last from the lips of Jesus the solacing assurance, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my servants, ye did it unto me."

EDWARD C. JONES.

The residence of the Missionary is 162 S. 17th Street near Pine, to which all communications, contributions, &c., may be directed.

Mr. Jones will always be found at home after 3 o'clock, P. M.