

A letter from the corresponding secretary of the New York State Inebriate Asylum to the Governor of the State of New York, on the subject of appropriation : dated December 22, 1857.

Contributors

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Dr R D Bibber

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A LETTER

FROM THE

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY

OF THE

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New York State Inebriate Asylum

TO THE

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK,

ON THE

SUBJECT OF APPROPRIATION.

DATED

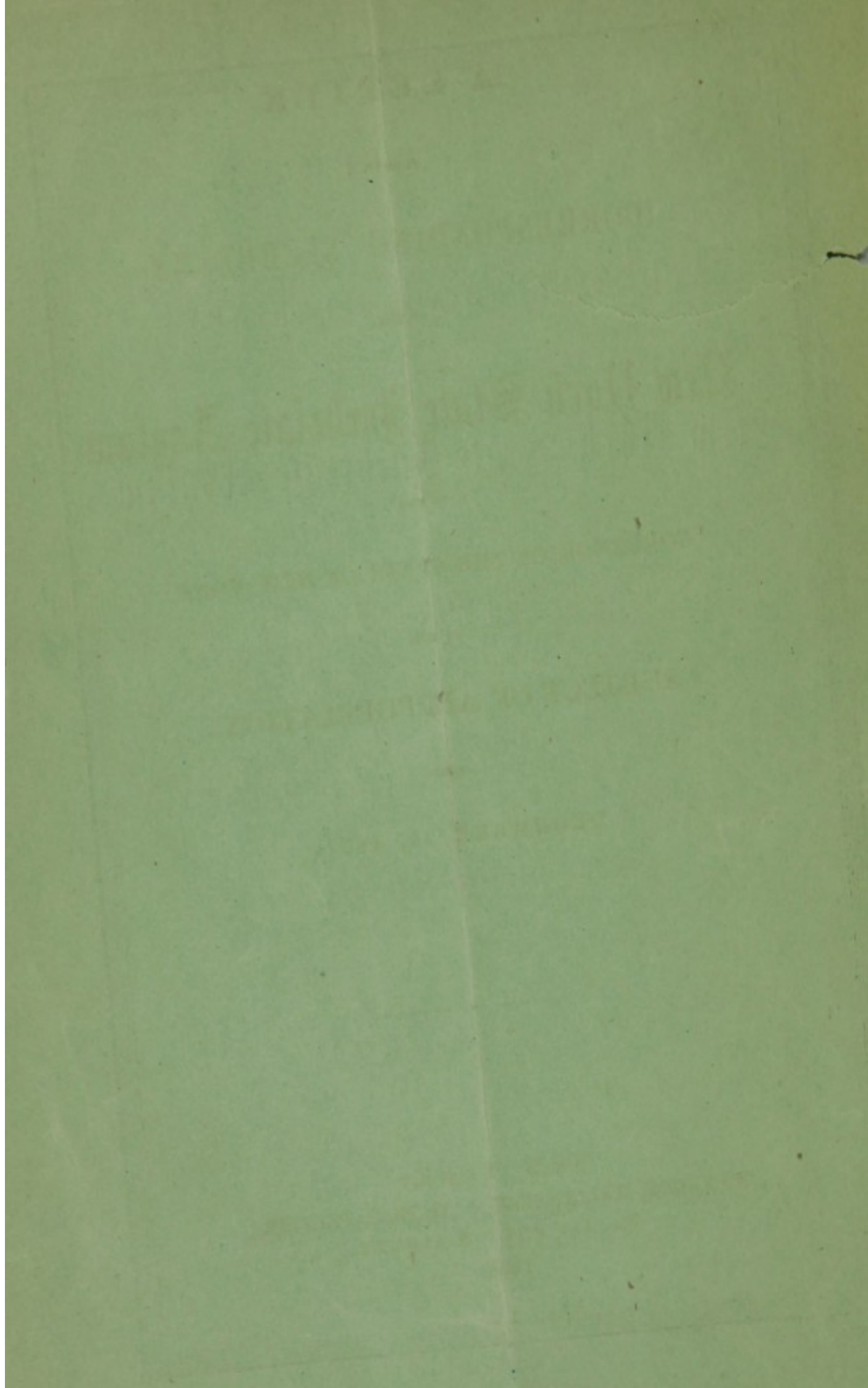
DECEMBER 22, 1857.

NEW YORK:

WYNKOOP, HALLENBECK & THOMAS, PRINTERS,

No. 113 FULTON STREET.

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HON. JOHN A. KING,

Governor of the State of New York :

Sir—

THE Trustees appointed by the Legislature of the State to found the New York State Inebriate Asylum, have organized their Board by electing Hon. Benjamin F. Butler, as President; Hon. Wm. T. McCoun, Vice-President; Hon. Josiah B. Williams second Vice-President; J. H. Ransom, Esq., Treasurer; Hon. Reuben H. Walworth, Hon. Washington Hunt, Hon. Ransom Balcom, Hon. Edward A. Lambert, and J. Edward Turner, the Committee on Location; William E. Dodge, Esq., John F. Rathbone, Esq., Hon. Charles Cook, Hon. Henry P. Alexander, and J. Edward Turner, the Committee on Finance.

The amount already subscribed to the fund of the institution is more than forty thousand dollars. Among the subscribers are the President of the United States and his Cabinet; the Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, and State officers; Justices Nelson, McLean, Grier, Wayne, and ninety other Judges; ex-President Van Buren, Ex-President Fillmore, Hon. Daniel S. Dickinson, Hon. Gerritt Smith, Hon. Preston King, Hon. John Savage, Hon. John Greig, and three hundred and eighty other Lawyers; Wm. C. Bryant, James Watson Webb, Gerard Hallock, Hon. H. J. Raymond, Hon. Erastus Brooks, Hon. Moses S. Beach, David M.

Reese, M. D., Ed. H. Dixon, M. D., Henry D. Bulkley, M. D., Samuel S. Purple, M. D., W. W. Hall, M. D., and eighty other Editors; Rev. Eliphalet Nott, D. D., Rev. Thomas DeWitt, D. D., Rev. Horatio Potter, D. D., Rev. E. S. Janes, D. D., Rev. N. S. S. Beman, D. D., Rev. D. Kennedy, D. D., Rev. J. S. P. Thompson, D. D., Rev. William Shelton, D. D., Rev. J. C. Lord, D. D., Rev. J. M. Campbell, D. D., Rev. Ray Palmer, D. D., Rev. R. W. Condit, D. D., Rev. W. C. Wisner, D. D., and four hundred other Clergymen; Valentine Mott, John W. Francis, Alexander H. Stevens, Willard Parker, J. M. Carnochan, C. R. Gilman, B. Fordyce Barker, James R. Wood, Elisha Harris, R. H. Thompson, James H. Armsby, Thomas C. Brinsmade, John McCall, J. F. Trowbridge, Richard A. Varick, John P. Gray, E. M. Moore, James P. White, Austin Flint, Frank Hamilton, and eight hundred other Physicians; James Boorman, Henry Grinnell, Stewart Brown, John C. Green, Robert B. Minturn, John David Wolfe, W. Butler Duncan, Erastus Corning, John Hecker, A. Champion, L. Wright, R. S. Burrows, L. A. Ward, H. White, G. B. Rich, Jesse Ketchum, and fifteen hundred other Merchants.

The Committee on location, in selecting a site for the institution, will have in view the healthfulness of its location, its central position, its easy access from all parts of the State, its abundant supply of pure water, and the requisite amount of land for agricultural purposes. Owing to the financial difficulties which have embarrassed many places, that would have made large and liberal offers for a site for the

Asylum, the Committee has thought best to defer locating the institution until Spring.

We are happy to state that the Trustees of this Asylum have brought it into existence without *compensation*, or without paying *its funds* to any agent for services rendered to this object.

In this brief communication, it would be impossible to lay before you the full and minute morbid anatomy and pathology of inebriety, nor do we think it necessary to present a complete history of ten years, spent in the investigation of this subject, to show the importance of an immediate action on the part of the State, in appropriating an amount sufficient to aid in founding the New York State Inebriate Asylum. Every means has been used on our part, in this country and in Europe, to make a thorough investigation of the physiological and pathological character of inebriety. We have studied its pathology from two hundred and eighty-five subjects, which we have carefully dissected, writing out the history of each case, with its morbid conditions, which history embraces more than six hundred pages of manuscript. These facts demonstrate that inebriety is a *disease constitutional and hereditary* in its character and tendencies, as much as any malady which man is heir to. Its hereditary character is demonstrated by the mortality of children (born of inebriate mothers,) in whom are found the same ulcerations of the stomach, liver, intestinal-canal, with the indurated condition of the brain, as we find in chronic cases, induced by five or ten years of excess in the use of alcoholic stimulants. A *peculiar feature* noticed in

this disease is that morbid condition of the stomach, which is transmitted from one generation to another, lying dormant in the constitution until the application of the exciting cause develops the morbid appetite, and places the victim of this malady as much beyond his own control (after partaking of the first glass of spirituous liquor,) as if he had drank to excess for years. Such cases were formerly looked upon as unaccountable phenomena, but are now regarded, by physicians thoroughly acquainted with this disease, as distinct manifestations of its hereditary character.

Another form of this disease (called mania-a-potu or delirium tremens) we regard as one of the *distinct stages* of its acute character, which is fixed by nature to be one of its peculiar types, and which often terminates in incurable insanity; but, the most terrible results produced by this malady remain to be told, in the offspring of inebriate parents, who are born constitutionally insane and idiotic. Such wrecks of human intellect now comprise more than forty per cent. of all our insanity and fifty per cent. of all our idiocy. There are many instances, in families where the parents are inebriates, that several of their children are found to be idiotic. One of the most remarkable cases we have met with was in a boatman's family, which I visited with a Russian physician, in the year 1850, in the town of Saratov, province of Saratov, Russia. The history of this family I learned from Dr. Foloff, who had been acquainted with them for a number of years. The Doctor stated that "the three eldest children (who were idiots) were born when their father and mother were confirmed inebriates. The

parents afterwards recovered from this malady and were well for four years, during which time they had two sons who were active and intelligent children. Finally, the parents again became inebriates, and had two more idiotic children."

We have been compelled to differ with some physicians, who have made the ratio of insanity, produced by inebriety, much less than our statistics show, from the fact that their results were reached by mistaking the exciting cause for the remote cause of insanity. These mistakes are very naturally made when the history of the patient is not fully known. Such mistakes have frequently come under our observation.

The increase of insanity and idiocy in this country, for the past ten years, has engaged the attention of the philanthropist and the statesman, as well as that of the physician. The increase in the United States, from 1840 to 1850, has been more than eighty per cent. This fact should arouse the attention and quicken the action of *our State*, to use every means in its power to stay this fearful waste of intellect. To prove that the increase of insanity and idiocy is due mainly to inebriety, we have only to compare Scotland with France, England with Austria, the United States with Prussia, as seen in the following tables, which present the ratio of the insane and idiotic persons in those countries :

INEBRIETY MOST PREVALENT.		INEBRIETY LEAST PREVALENT.	
Scotland,	1 to 563	France,	1 to 1,000
United States,	1 to 751	Prussia,	1 to 1,140
England,	1 to 793	Austria,	1 to 1,258

In the study of this malady, we have not neglected to procure the opinions of our profession upon the importance and practicability of establishing in our State this institution. The leading medical men of our country have already expressed their views on this subject, in memorials to the Legislature of 1857, signed by Valentine Mott, John W. Francis, Thomas Cock, Edward Delafield, Martin Paine, Gunning S. Bedford, John P. Batchelder, A. C. Post, Richard Pennell, Alden March, Thos. W. Blatchford, Joseph M. Smith, Alonzo Clark, Horace Green, Jared Linsly, Wm. H. Van Buren, John C. Cheesman, John Watson, Robert Watts, John T. Metcalf, A. D. Wilson, Alfred Freeman, Edward Bayard, D. Ayres, W. N. Blackman, and thirteen hundred other physicians, expressing their views in the following words :

“We, the undersigned, Physicians and citizens of the State of New York, would respectfully call the attention of your honorable body to the vital importance of an immediate appropriation of a sum of money sufficient to build the Inebriate Asylum, which has already been chartered by the State of New York. We, as practitioners, have long felt the necessity of having an asylum, where the inebriate could be medically and morally treated, with sufficient restraint to control the patient.

“Without such an institution the physician has been compelled to turn from his patient discouraged, disheartened, and defeated; and the victim of this painful malady—be he rich or poor, high or low, educated or uneducated—alike must find a drunkard’s death and a drunkard’s grave. With this institution we

can save hundreds who are now crowding our insane asylums, inundating our courts, dying in our prisons, and perishing in our streets.

“ We are not inclined to urge the argument of economy in establishing the Inebriate Asylum, (although we have every reason to believe that it will be a self-supporting institution) when fifty-five per cent. of all our insanity and sixty-eight per cent. of all our idiocy spring directly or indirectly from inebriety alone. We regard it as a matter of duty so sacred, that until discharged we have no right as a moral and enlightened people to finish our great internal improvements, erect monuments in commemoration of battles, public works to art, or even costly temples to God.

“ We maintain that our whole lives, spent in our professional duties and as private citizens, go to prove that in the present state of society there is no institution so much needed as an asylum for inebriates. Medical science demands it; civilization demands it; morality demands it; Christianity demands it; and everything sacred and good in our country demands it.

“ We commend this great and philanthropic object to your enlightened minds and noble impulses, trusting that the Inebriate Asylum will be an ornament to the State of New York, and stand among the brightest tributes of humanity which our country or the world has ever created for the benefit of mankind.”

The State Medical Society, at their last meeting at Albany, February 8th, 1857, fully indorsed the Inebriate Asylum, and unanimously adopted a resolu-

tion offered by George Burr, M. D., of Binghamton, recommending it to the favor and earnest support not only of the Legislature of the State, but to the public at large.

The following is a copy of the memorial of the Onondaga Medical Society, addressed to the Legislature, January 27th, 1857.

"The undersigned, your memorialists, the officers and members of the Onondaga Medical Society, have watched with much interest the progress made by Dr. Turner and others in establishing an Inebriate Asylum, and have rejoiced at the success which has crowned their labors. The spirit which has been exhibited by our citizens, needs but to be seconded by your Honorable body, to realize the establishment of an institution which, in the opinion of your memorialists, will prove to be one of the most important and beneficial, in its influence and results, which was ever devised for an unfortunate portion of our fellow-citizens. From a long experience in the duties of that profession which has brought us in daily contact with the victims of a diseased appetite, we have been forced to the conclusion that an institution, in which the patient could be medically and morally treated, would prove to be of greater benefit, socially, politically, and charitably, than any other institution of its nature in our land.

"Your memorialists believe that the system devised by the friends of that undertaking is founded upon correct scientific and pathological views, and that, if it shall appear worthy to your Honorable body to lend the needed assistance in conjunction with that

which has been so promptly extended by your fellow citizens at large, we shall readily experience that benefit which can be realized in no other manner, and which, we sincerely believe, will result in a success more perfect than may be expected by those less acquainted with the many forms and characteristics of this unfortunate and extensive malady.

"Your memorialists, therefore pray that the public assistance may be extended to an undertaking which will prove a public benefit, and that the private confidence and individual efforts may be generously seconded and encouraged, by the guardians of the public welfare: and your memorialists will ever pray.

"In testimony whereof, witness the seal of our Society, and the signatures of its President and Secretary Signed :

[L. S.] "A. B. SHIPMAN, M. D., President.

"WILLIAM MANLIUS SMITH, Secretary.

"Syracuse, January 27th, 1857."

In this brief paper it will be impossible to give in detail the medical and moral treatment which this institution will adopt, in carrying out its great mission. It will rely upon the careful classification of its patients, its rigid but kind police discipline, its judicious hygienic and medical appliances, its social, moral, and religious influences, combined with employment and amusements suited to the patient.

The projectors of this institution have made themselves acquainted with the different systems of treatment and the varied classifications which have been

adopted and carried out by the insane asylums in this country and in Europe. They are of the opinion that the Inebriate Asylum will have more elements for the successful treatment of inebriety, as a physical and moral disease, than any insane asylum can have for the treatment of insanity. The fact is obvious to every mind, that this institution will have the power to remove *at once* the exciting cause of this malady, by removing the patient from his home to the asylum, while, in the case of insanity, the removal of the patient to an insane hospital does not at once remove the cause of insanity. It may take weeks or even months before the causes of mental derangement can be determined.

The leading physicians of our State, who have had much experience in the treatment of this disease, agree that, if there were an asylum adapted for the medical and moral treatment of the inebriate, eighty per cent. could be successfully treated. Like views have been expressed to me by the leading medical men of Europe. The late celebrated Dr. S. B. Woodward, of the Worcester Insane Asylum, in an article upon this subject, says, that "nine-tenths of the inebriates, if they could be brought under the treatment of an asylum adapted to this disease, could be restored to health and temperance."

In the valuable report made by the Senate Committee appointed to visit the charitable institutions of our State, we find the following statement: "That the most fertile source of pauperism, lunacy, and crime (as all statistics respecting these evils show), is intemperance. It sends to the Lunatic Asylums a

large proportion of their inmates, to the poor-houses seventy per cent., and to the jails seventy-five per cent." It is obvious, to every person who has read this able report of the Senate Committee, that the Inebriate Asylum, if properly endowed by the State to carry out its medical and moral treatment, will lessen the number of criminals in our jails, diminish the number of paupers in our alms-houses, reduce the number of lunatics in our insane asylums, prevent hundreds of worse than fatherless children from being committed to the house of refuge, in a word, relieve every charitable institution of our State.

There has never been, in this country or in any other, an institution adapted for the medical treatment and restraint of the inebriate. Medical men of the past, as well as of the present day, have struggled almost in vain with this terrible malady, from the fact of their having no controlling power over the patient. The practitioner demands, in the name of humanity, an asylum where the victim of this disease can be properly restrained and medically dealt with.

Observation teaches that our State Insane Asylums (which are second to none in the world) are not adapted for the restraint and treatment of the inebriate. We are doing a serious injury to the insane, as well as to the inebriate, by admitting them into the same hospital and classifying them in the same ward. Are we not irritating the former, mentally degrading the latter, and defeating in a degree the great object of this truly noble charity?

Dr. Wilbur, the Superintendent of the State Idiotic Asylum, has refused to receive inebriate patients

when applied to, on the ground that his Institution was not adapted for the restraint and medical treatment of this class of patients. The reception of such patients would defeat the great mission for which this benevolent institution was founded.

Neither are our hospitals adapted for the restraint and treatment of the inebriate. The following case, which occurred in our City Hospital last September, illustrates this fact :—"John Mead, a seaman (late of the steamship *Arago*), having been in the hospital a few days undergoing treatment for delirium tremens, secretly procured a carving-knife used by one of the nurses in cutting bread, and made an attack upon the nurse in charge, then on a sailor in the same ward, and finally on a young man named Wagener, who lay asleep on his bed. Wagener received several wounds, of which he soon after died." Mead has recently been tried for murder, and acquitted on the ground of insanity.

Experience teaches that in the present state of society the inebriate cannot be restrained in our prisons and alms-houses without physical suffering, abuse and degradation; without becoming worse himself and presenting a demoralizing picture to others. In visiting these institutions we have not been able to find a case of inebriety that has been properly, medically and morally, dealt with. Some have gone forth from these moral pest-houses preferring to perish in the street, rather than to remain associated with criminals. The sad history of some of the leading men of our country and State illustrates this fact.

Government is as much bound to protect society

from the outrages of the inebriate, as against the diabolical acts committed by the insane. The commonwealth should control this disease, for its victims are more dangerous to the lives of the community, and their own, than the inmates of our insane asylums, were they set at liberty.

We are acquainted with men who have occupied high positions in the church, in the state, on the bench, at the bar, and in the medical profession, who have lost all self-control and who must perish by this disease. We will give the history of a case which came under our treatment, which shows the importance of having an asylum to control the patient. Dr. C., a gentleman who had occupied a high position in his profession, came to us for treatment and restraint. We took him into our office in order to have him under our immediate care. He remained with us four weeks, during which time he secretly drank the alcohol from six jars containing morbid specimens. On asking him why he had committed this loathsome act, he replied, "Sir, it is as much impossible for me to control this diseased appetite, as it is to control the pulsations of my heart." Finding that it was out of our power to control him, we were under the necessity of sending him back to his friends, where death closed the career of this unfortunate man.

We have the names of more than four hundred inebriate women in the State, who must die of this disease if they are not medically treated and controlled in an institution. Most of these are in the highest walks of life; educated and accomplished.

The following case (for whose history we are indebted to Dr. Q., of this city,) demonstrates the hereditary character of inebriety. This case was a lady belonging to one of the most respectable families of our State, who died in the arms of his preceptor, Dr. C., in the year 1840. The "Dr. relates that one of the daughters of this lady, who was present and witnessed the death of her mother, inquired of him the cause of her death. He replied, (as he was a student,) that Dr. C. would answer her question more satisfactorily." Dr. C., then being asked the same question, replied: "That for a long series of years her mother had been in the habit of stimulating to excess, which had produced the disease which caused her death." "Since that time," says Dr. Q., "the daughter who witnessed her mother's death had become an inebriate, and her sister and brother had both died from the same disease." Who can calculate the extensive influence of an inebriate mother or wife upon the physical and moral condition of her children, and of the effect of the former and corruption of the latter upon the order and happiness of society?

Every principle of sound political economy shows that the State is bound to provide for its unfortunate children. With regard to paupers, it is clear and imperative. It should be the duty of every Christian government to provide the best means for the medical treatment of the inebriate, and to take care of *those* among this class of patients who are incurable. This duty of society, besides being urged by every consideration of humanity, will be seen to be more imperative, when we consider that inebriety is, in many

cases, the result of a physical disease, produced by the *excesses* of our fathers, which excesses were the result of the social institutions and observances of their day.

The memorials, which have already been presented to the Legislature, show that the leading men of our State are willing to be taxed to found this Asylum. They consider this institution second in importance to none in our country. The petitioners to the Legislature for an appropriation, and the subscribers to the fund of this Asylum, represent a large portion of the intellectual and moral worth of our people, and more than fifty per cent. of all the property of our State. The character of the petitioners is as follows: Hon. A. C. Paige, Hon. George F. Comstock, Hon. William H. Shankland, Hon. Samuel L. Selden, Hon. Levi F. Bowen, and forty other judges; Hon. Greene C. Bronson, Hon. George Wood, Hon. Charles O'Connor, and three hundred and fifty other lawyers; Rev. George Potts, D. D., Rev. Stephen H. Tyng, D. D., Rev. John Knox, D. D., Rev. Geo. B. Cheever, D. D., Rev. Wm. R. Williams, D. D., and three hundred other clergymen; William B. Astor, Stephen Whitney, George Griswold, Peter Cooper, Stephen Van Rensselaer, Grinnell, Minturn & Co., Boorman, Johnston & Co., Spofford, Tileston & Co., Goodhue & Co., Alsop & Chauncey, A. T. Stewart & Co., and sixteen hundred other merchants.

The medical men of our State have forwarded to the Legislature the largest medical petition that has ever been presented to any legislative body in our country, showing the necessity of the Inebriate Asylum to be

more urgent than any other institution in our land: "That with this institution they could save hundreds who are now crowding our insane asylums, inundating our courts, dying in our prisons, and perishing in our streets." The views set forth in this memorial are founded upon sound physiological and pathological truths, and are the professional opinions of the first medical men of our country and age.

The medical profession as well as other friends of this institution expect that the State Government will respond (by granting a liberal appropriation to assist in founding the New York State Inebriate Asylum), as soon as their views showing its importance shall have been fully laid before them. It is to be supposed that the State of New York is rich enough and liberal enough to respond to all humane and medical institutions, which her wealthy men, her medical men, her judiciary, and her clergy regard to be important for the well-being of society, and for the preservation of the health and lives of her citizens.

The Government of France, which has so long been celebrated for its humane and medical institutions, has never turned a *deaf ear* to the applications made by her scientific and her medical men for assistance in founding hospitals or institutions of charity. France, whether at peace or in war, with her treasury full or depleted, has always found money enough for every object which her medical men, her judiciary, and her church have considered to be important for the well-being of society, and the preservation of the health and lives of her subjects. We hope that our State will imitate the noble and liberal policy of

France, in *first* providing for *all* of her *benevolent* and *humane institutions*, *before* extending her national improvements.

If, however, it should appear in your judgment that the financial condition of the State will not permit you to recommend to the Legislature to make an appropriation from the general fund to assist in founding the New York State Inebriate Asylum, there is still a revenue by which this institution can be amply endowed without affecting the finances of the State a single dollar. The revenue which arises from the Excise-Law should be appropriated to assist in founding this institution, as this is the only legitimate object to which that revenue belongs. If the State permits a revenue to arise from this traffic, it should amply provide for the disease it creates. Our almshouses now receive this revenue, yet there has never been a single case of inebriety which has received a judicious medical and moral treatment within their walls.

We would suggest that fifty per cent. of the revenue arising from the Excise-Law be appropriated to assist in founding the New York State Inebriate Asylum, and that each county in the State be entitled to the privilege of sending inebriate patients (free of charge) to said Asylum, regulated by the amount which said county shall pay to the treasurer of said Asylum.

In placing this Asylum in the front rank of the charities of the age, we would not diminish the importance of other great benevolent institutions of our country. They are the expressions of the noble im

pulses of individual benevolence. They are a shadowing forth of that true humanity and exalted paternal love which our State throws around her weak and unfortunate children.

We cannot urge the claims of this Asylum upon the State on the ground of financial economy, (although we have every reason to believe that it will be self-supporting, and save each county ten times the amount it will cost them). *In the name of economy the inebriate has been let alone and secreted at home, eating out the moral, social, physical, and financial existence of families; or permitted to die in alms-houses, jails and highways. In the name of economy the insane are now chained in cages, locked up in dungeons, permitted to wallow in their own filth, half clad with filthy rags, with no bed to lie upon save a few handfuls of straw spread upon the damp floor.* We urge the importance of this Institution upon higher grounds than that of economy of dollars and cents. It is based upon principles underlying the whole fabric of our institutions and government—reaching out into every family of our land. The physical constitution and mental powers of our people are the great elements which this Asylum will save and preserve. Upon this economy we urge the claims of this Institution.

With much respect, I remain your humble and obedient servant,

J. EDWARD TURNER,

Cor. Sec'y of the N. Y. State Inebriate Asylum.

97 CLINTON PLACE, 8th Street, }
New York, Dec. 22, 1857. }

