

## **Letter from William Tuke to Joseph Docwra**

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Dear Friend  
Josh Doxey

York 9<sup>th</sup> of Month 1872

I rec<sup>d</sup>. in due course the letter of amble Mary Alexander and the next day one from thee, and another signed J. D. & J. H. Mary Bond they are so consonant one with another that one answer may serve for all.

It is intimated that the Committee had availed themselves of the spur of the moment to send it away by the friends expected from Essex. Now I am much mistaken if I did not mention, that her removal had been under consideration for some time past; however it was so, and we concluded that the returning in company with two friends was an opportunity much in her favour. How we shall reconcile her to stay much longer, if she continues well, is not easy to determine at present, for who can controvert what she says, "that this is of age, and nobody has a right to confine her, when in her right mind."

We always considered Mr. Alexander's Subscription of £300 as very liberal, and for which she is entitled to the privilege of more recommendations than she has availed herself of; but she states it as if "sunk for 18 years past" though she has rec<sup>d</sup>. to this time and will continue to receive full interest for her life. It is therefore in reality not more than a legacy, certain on her decease, or a donation of so much more than she could at that time have purchased an annuity of £15 for her life. We do not wish to depreciate her liberality, but in the manner she and her friends mention it, it does seem overrated.

In the letter signed by J. D. & J. H. & Mary Bond it is stated as their apprehension that "an Asylum Mary Alexander's Liberality has secured for her (J. D.) a seatable to the Rules of the Institution; her contribution having lain many years without her claiming admission for any one, and that therefore they consider she has an undoubted privilege now to claim it. It remaining at 'The Retreat'." Is it meant for her life whether sane or insane? If that be the meaning it is a doctrine which the Managers of the Retreat cannot admit; neither can they be guided by the judgment of the J. D. & J. H. to whom Mr. Alexander says, "she has refused the consideration of J. D. & J. H. case." Can they say that J. D. will never recover, or can they judge when is the proper time to discharge her as recovered? Had they even been appointed by the Lord Chancellor as her Committee we presume that they could not decide without the judgment of medical Persons legally appointed. We conclude that the Committee of the Retreat from the information of the Superintendent & the Physician are proper judges when to discharge a patient as recovered. But Mr. Alexander complains



complains that she was closely dealt by, that nearly from the first, there was a strong & manifest unwillingness to continue at B. a "Patient on her recommendations" This was by no means a solitary instance of wishing to discharge Patients apparently recovered at the end of a few months, for divers have been so discharged, <sup>1000</sup> and though they previously manifested a strong propensity to succeed, have since continued perfectly well to the present time. We could not ensure against a relapse in any of these cases. It is probable that some circumstances operated unfavorably on B's return, particularly the illness of Mr. Alexander, which was unexpected to Sarah, and we may presume occasioned her much anxiety.

It is true that several Patients have been continued at the Retreat, whom we could or nearly so. Sarah Impney & Wm Burnham are of that number. Sarah Impney's leaving the Institution, though not considered perfectly well has been repeatedly proposed to her, but she always expressed an inclination to continue. It was once proposed for Wm Burnham to go, but when the time came he was quite unwilling. His removal is now again proposed by his Son, and to which he accedes.

The <sup>religion</sup> ~~disposition~~ of Persons with their free choice is certainly justifiable, but the Institution has not a right to exercise compulsion after a reasonable time of proof of recovery. We are aware of the difficulty of providing a suitable situation for B. such difficulties are not uncommon in the Society and are often very trying to Friends, but the Retreat is not to be a refuge for all discontented and uneasy Tempers; had B. enjoyed less indulgence I am persuaded the difficulty respecting her would not have been so great.

The Committee will <sup>not</sup> doubt do what they consistently can respecting a further trial, but I cannot say what will be the result.

Thy affectionate Friend

Wm. Tucker  
Wm. Alexander  
for B. Burnham &c  
26/1/1812