Papers relating to John Ashworth

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Memoranda

relating to

John Ashworth

11 mo 18. 1847

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Some account of the traits of character and the conduct of John Ashworth; — drawn up for the information and guidance of those who have the charge of him, and on that account, the case has intentionally been divested of all allusion to Parental or other feelings towards him, and confined simply to a mere narrative of the leading facts which have come under observation

Box 82

11 mo 16. 1847

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during the period of his childhood and whilst at boarding school he evinced a disposition to be singular and obstinate: a willingness to be led, & an unwillingness to be driven or coerced. —

The singularity which he displayed was denoted by articles of dress and latterly in ~~or~~ finery. but this was not of itself deserving of notice, except as a symptom, which when carried to great excess is held to be a sort of weakness. —

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The Obstinacy which he betrayed, has been the most remarkable feature of weak-ness, — and of late years this has been accompanied by a large amount of Vanity and Self Conceit. —

He has lately divulged to an acquaintance an instance of his own obstinacy when at school which was not before made known to the family, namely. that upon one occasion the schoolmaster set him a task or sum which he resolved that

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he would not perform, & after having been confined to a room for three days upon stinted diet, he was at length liberated ——

On leaving the "Friends School" at Tottenham at the age of 16½ yrs. the Master, Thos Binns remarked in a letter to his father, "that there was something in John's character, which, if not brought into subjection by the power of Religion, would exercise a baneful influence on his character through life." ——

On leaving school he was placed in the Cotton Manufacture of his Father and Uncle, and at the end of two Years he had not made as much progress as it was reasonable to have expected from a young person of Education and abilities such as he possessed, and he was placed in another business, that of Dobson & Metcalf of Bolton, as Mechanist or Machine Maker, where his regular attention was more strenuously insisted upon.

His mind seemed to run upon Mechanical Toys rather than upon the study of enlarged affairs —

[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
his most d[illegible]

The making of a diminu-
-tive steam engine or a
water wheel - would occupy
his most diligent attention
for weeks or months and he
would himself labour, and keep in
employment other artificers
for three or four hours at
night after having gone
through the laborious
duties of the day: shewing
a sort of indomitable energy
whilst the fit of liking
of such things was upon him
and afterwards he would
be for some considerable
period un-mindful of
such hobbies ——

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Before the expiration of his hiring as a Machinist he became dissatisfied with his employment, and remained at home in a state of illness or listlessness —

At length, a period arrived when his Father & Uncle renewed the articles of Partnership between themselves in their own business, and way was made for the employment in the partnership concern of the aforesaid John Ashworth, together with two of his brothers, one of them older, and the other younger than himself.

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This employment was one of considerable responsibility, and the hopes of emolument good. — He entered into it in the third month of this year 1847. — and with much of seeming alacrity of spirits and cheerful dedication —

Before a month had passed he had ceased to confer on business with his elder Brother and with his father also in the way he was called upon to do by the articles of his engagement. — and he very soon betrayed other marks of insubordination —

[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

concurently with this disregard of his duties in business, he showed in his social demeanour, and at home also, a sort of domineering disregard of all the ordinary courtesies of life. — until at length it was apparent that at any rate he must be made to yield due attention to the requirings of business, and explanations of errors and neglect of duty were called for which John would not condescend to enter into. — eventually this led to his Father's giving him ~~[illegible]~~ a month in which to reconsider what were his duties, his obligations, and his position in life. —

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During the month of his probation and trial he appeared disinclined to make any approaches towards a reconciliation, and his conduct in the family became so reckless that his Parents as well as his brothers and sisters unanimously concurred in the absolute necessity of his severance from themselves — This severance took place in fifth month last, say six months ago, and at that time his Father gave him permission

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to take up his residence with Rachel Lee, a Farmer's wife who at one time was his schoolmistress and had lived in the family, and he undertook to pay for John's Boarding either at Rachel's house or at any other place which might be found either more eligible or more commodious, until he could make some better provision for himself as he so confidently had anticipated that he could ——

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Following his departure from his fathers house he found a welcome reception and entertainment with several of his fathers relatives and friends, all of whom tried to convince him of his Errors, and of the necessity of his submission to his fathers will, with a view to his restoration to his family, all of which advice he not only resisted but defended his own conduct and endeavoured to give a disagreeable colouring and exposure of his fathers ~~ill~~ treatment of him —

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The names of one or other of these Gentlemen who showed him attention he will in all probability refer to in his conversations. and therefore the knowledge of them may serve to elucidate points of conversation. —

Mr Nowasson.
Mr Bazley —
Mr Rushton
Mr Hick.
Mr Paulton
Mr. Rawson
and others
of his family.

All these are persons of commercial character and of important influence excepting Mr Paulton who is in professional life and is highly talented —

After having spent three or four months, in availing himself of all the hospitality which lay in his way, and finding that he was sinking and perhaps somewhat disappointed in the elevated notions of importance he had entertained of himself, he got employment as Mill Manager for Mr. Clegg, of Tyldesley about 8 miles distant. —

This employment was obtained at the instance and by the recommendation of Mr. Bazley, before mentioned, who is the President of the Chr. of Commerce of Manchester.

He entered into his new employment with a good deal of enthusiasm and no doubt honestly intended to make his way in the world out of the expectancies which the engagement appeared to hold out —

At the end of six wks. of service, the Mill was stopped by reason of the badness of trade and has not yet been re-opened. thus he met with a disappointmt., and during the last six wks. since this occurred he has betrayed much more heaviness and despondency —

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It has been since this disappointmt. principally, if not entirely, that he has found his way to the house of Rachel Lee. – It is in a retired country place and in this place, and in the absence of employment he has no doubt found it impossible to avoid meditation, and it is my possible, that this may have overpowered him. –

On the fourth day of the present month, he found his way to his Father's house, and assured the family of his contrition &

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expressing a firm belief that if his Father did not at once forgive him he should soon become a "Moping Idiot" —

His father did not hesitate to express his forgiveness and willingness for reconciliation, but he did not then proceed to receive him again into the family. neither did John expect this. —

Four or five days afterwards a messenger arrived conveying the information

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mind.—

that John had shown indications of aberration of mind: he was immediately fetched home and in three days afterwards his case had become so far confirmed as to occasion his removal to the Retreat —

His prevailing weaknesses are —
Obstinacy. —
Vanity. — a great idea of his own cleverness: his idea of superiority to his brothers in this respect. — and a craving for low flattery —
difficulty in continuous reading.

lead
which
referred

The leading points of character which have already been referred to, are intended to denote the severer qualities only. — such as may have been the most active in some incipient state of his present malady. — But it must not be supposed that his character has been utterly devoid of the softer and gentler qualities. on the contrary he has shown many traits of good natured and amiable characteristics, and at times has carried them out almost to excess —

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His local attachment was very strong.– and especially his domestic attachment.–

On his leaving home to attend Boarding School he felt the separation with unusual keenness. — And After the recent severance had taken place in his family, it was evident that he was very soon brought into the most earnest craving to return, and this was manifested in many different ways but principally by his apparent inability to keep away from the neighbourhood of the works and premises —

there was nevertheless some un-conquerable difficulty in his own mind which always prevented him from bringing matters to issue — he could not stand the idea of ma-king a surrender which was un-conditional. —

He wrote many letters to his Father and his Mother as well as other members of the family. all of which were full of the most estima-ble expressions of kindly sentiment and goodwill — but wer. 'er he had finished the letter he let out something which betrayed reservation, if not insincerity.

There was always a sort of nervous sensibility about him which was particularly active in disturbing his feelings and his sleep — such as the hearing of some sharp expression, or which would not have discomposed any other person —

When in good health and free from unpleasantness he could be as full of mirth as any one, and as free and generous as any one, —

RETREAT
6/19/17