

**Observations on the admission of medical pupils to the wards of Bethlem Hospital, for the purposes of studying mental diseases / [John Webster].**

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*The Medical Society, of London*  
*From the author*

**OBSERVATIONS**

ON THE

**ADMISSION OF MEDICAL PUPILS**

TO THE  
PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL HOSPITAL OF  
BETHLEHEM AND BETHLEM

**WARDS OF BETHLEM HOSPITAL,**

FOR THE PURPOSE OF

**STUDYING MENTAL DISEASES.**

*SECOND EDITION.*

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By JOHN WEBSTER, M.D., &c.,

One of the Governors.

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LONDON:

PRINTED BY J. MITCHELL AND Co., (LATE BRETTELL,)  
RUPERT STREET, HAYMARKET.

1842.

TO

ALDERMAN SIR PETER LAURIE, KNT.,

PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL HOSPITALS OF  
BRIDEWELL AND BETHLEM,

*&c. &c. &c.*

THE following observations are respectfully dedicated by the Author, as a small token of esteem for the upright character of a zealous and able Magistrate; to mark the high estimation entertained towards him, as an efficient President of Bridewell and Bethlem Hospitals; and also to express his sincere regard for a Gentleman of much private worth, who has always been the friend of judicious improvements.

*56, Grosvenor Street,  
1842.*

## OBSERVATIONS, &c.

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AT the Quarterly General Court of the Governors of Bridewell and Bethlem Hospitals, held in January last, at which Sir Peter Laurie occupied the Chair; after the Annual Reports of the Physicians had been read, I drew attention to the propriety of granting a more free admission than heretofore, to members of the medical profession, for the purpose of studying in the wards of Bethlem Hospital, the various forms of mental diseases, met with in the numerous patients of that excellent Institution. But no notice having been previously given, of any motion on the subject, the question could not be discussed. However, as the proposition then casually mooted, appeared to be rather favourably received; and as it is, to my mind at least, a subject of the highest importance, both to society at large, and to the medical profession, as well in respect of the benefits it would confer on the former, as from the superior knowledge which medical practitioners would thus acquire, regarding a most important class of diseases; I now beg leave to address to the President and Governors of Bridewell and Bethlem Hospitals, the following brief observations, with the view of explaining more fully than I could otherwise do, the various bearings of a question, in which I feel much interest; trusting, that the arguments here brought forward, in support of the proposed innovation, may have some effect in proving satisfactorily, that, so far from any injurious effects being likely to arise, from permitting a freer admission of medical students, into the wards of Bethlem Hospital, than is at present allowed; on the contrary, by such a proceeding, many benefits would ultimately ensue to the profession, of which I am a member, and, through their instrumentality, to all classes of the community.

Believing at the same time, although great improvements have been already effected at Bethlem Hospital, especially since the accession to the Chair of the present President; nevertheless, there still remains room for further ameliorations. Entertaining also a hope, that the change I now advocate, respecting the admission of medical pupils, might meet with approval, provided it were made sufficiently manifest, that the utility of the Institution would not thereby be diminished, or the comfort of its inmates, or their ultimate

recovery interrupted; I therefore feel less hesitation in thus continuing a discussion on the above subject, being confident, should the proposition fail in obtaining the sanction of the Governors generally, after due consideration, it will as much arise from the anticipated difficulty of carrying into effect the proposed change, as from any inherent objections really affecting such an innovation, although admitted to possess many advantages.

As insanity materially affects not only the mental and physical health, but the civil status of its victims, few subjects are, consequently, more deserving of attention, by the philanthropist or the physician, than this complaint: and if properly investigated by the zealous student, much may be done to alleviate so serious a malady, when unable wholly to counteract the injurious effects, it produces upon the human constitution. The restoration to reason of a fellow-creature affected with lunacy, is an object meriting the attention of every medical practitioner, with a view to the cure of this malady. And since few diseases impose occasionally so much responsibility upon the attending physician as mania, whether the case be considered in a medical or legal sense, very serious consequences may sometimes result to the patients or the relatives, should even a trifling mistake be committed by the attendant. Examples of errors in judgment of the most painful description, might be quoted from books and public records, to shew the important consequences sometimes resulting to a fellow-creature, from inattention to the premonitory symptoms of mania. But it is unnecessary to enter into details, since it will be readily allowed by those conversant with the subject, that scarcely any complaint to which mankind is liable, deserves more to be studied than diseases of the mind; in order to alleviate, when unable to cure, the attacks of such a deplorable affliction to humanity as mental alienation, which destroys, as it were, the moral existence of a fellow-creature, although physical life, with all its wonderful functions, still continues to animate this mortal frame.

In order to place the question at issue in a proper light, it appears useful, previously to examine into the actual state of medical education generally pursued in this country; respecting the study of mental diseases; because, if the means for acquiring information and experience, on so important a malady as insanity, be as defective, as I believe them to be actually, the necessity for some alteration, in the present system, becomes consequently more imperative.

For ignorance regarding the nature and diagnostic symptoms of mania, when affecting the human constitution, or inability on the part of the medical attendant, to direct whatever treatment may be best adapted for the cure of such a serious affliction, are questions of very considerable moment to the community; and great responsibility is often imposed upon the practitioner, to whom the care of an individual so affected is committed; more especially, as the recovery or continuance of the patient's complaint may, sometimes, very much depend upon the measures, first adopted to alleviate this disease, even on the appearance of a slight premonitory symptom. Correct knowledge of mental diseases, and sound judgment in the application of appropriate means, whether remedial or moral, in the treatment of these affections are, therefore, especially necessary to every conscientious physician, desirous of practising his profession, with advantage to the community and satisfaction to himself; therefore, no opportunity to gain experience, on so momentous a subject as insanity, should ever be neglected by the zealous student.

Instead of considering the study of insanity, and the proper treatment of that disease, of secondary importance to any medical practitioner, engaged in the practice of his profession; I think these subjects are even more essential, than some of those subsidiary objects of inquiry, to which, more or less attention has recently been directed. The frequency of mania, and the responsible position medical men are sometimes called upon to occupy, without previous preparation; as in cases where that calamitous disease suddenly attacks a parent, or the beloved member of a family, is so obvious, that it is unnecessary to enlarge upon the point, farther than to repeat, that much often depends upon the proceedings adopted by the practitioner, who may be called in to attend the afflicted patient, in the early stages of this complaint. The peace and prosperity of an entire household, the future happiness and comfort of the individual most concerned, or even of the medical attendant himself, may often hinge upon a word said, or an action done inadvertently; and no practitioner anxious to perform his duties conscientiously, ought ever to neglect an occasion for obtaining knowledge on this disease, lest the time might come, and that unexpectedly, when he would much regret the want of experience, adequate for every emergency.

Undoubtedly, throughout the whole range of medical science, it must be acknowledged, that nothing can well be more limited, than the means of obtaining practical know-

ledge, which the medical profession at present possess, in this department of study; notwithstanding its obvious importance to the community. Since, not only are the opportunities for investigating mental diseases, of a very partial description, but even the subject of insanity, does not form an essential part of the stipulated courses of lectures, required by the various licensing medical corporations, from the candidates for their diplomas. Indeed, excepting by the teachers of medical jurisprudence, mental diseases are seldom alluded to, much less properly investigated; and whenever the subject of insanity is actually noticed in these lectures, the inquiry is only of a secondary, or legal description, neither embracing sufficiently the pathology of this extensive class of diseases, nor the curative treatment which the physician ought to pursue. In fact, the investigation of diseases of the mind, their nature, and the remedies best adapted for their cure, if not wholly neglected, are very partially investigated, by the general medical student. And this serious defect in medical education, will continue to prevail, until the doors of hospitals, where lunatic patients are admitted, are opened, under proper regulations, and clinical instruction given, to those students who may be anxious to obtain information.

In consequence of the difficulties at present impeding the diffusion of knowledge, on this important subject, and seeing it does not constitute an essential part of medical education, the study of mental diseases is too much neglected at the present day, excepting by a very limited number of medical practitioners, who confine themselves to that department of their profession, and therefore, do not usually practise in any other class of diseases. This division of labour, as it may be called, is found to be advantageous in the Metropolis, and in large towns; but any restriction regarding the knowledge of insanity, is by no means useful to the public generally, and acts injuriously on the great majority of medical men in this country; who should be as well versed in the treatment of mental diseases, as in those of the chest, or of any other part of the human frame. Many are undoubtedly quite competent for the treatment of mania; but my wish is, to make that knowledge universal in the profession. Nevertheless, although impressed with the importance of this subject, should any pupil, during the usual period of his preparatory studies, wish to obtain experience and information on insanity, the path to knowledge is so beset with difficulties,

that notwithstanding all the zeal, the student might otherwise have, he would find it almost impossible to attain his object, unless through personal favour, or at a very great expense; neither of which alternatives, are desirable means for acquiring knowledge, in a liberal profession.

Compared with France and Germany, the present state of medical education in England, as regards insanity, is so far behind, that many steps must be made in advance, ere it can be considered as on a par with either of these countries; and, on looking at the marked progress, most branches of medical science has made in this country, since the commencement of the nineteenth century, it must be confessed, that the state of our knowledge of mental diseases, has not kept pace with other departments, and until very recently, was unworthy the age in which we live. Exceptions, undoubtedly, exist to this general description; but unless greater facilities are afforded for studying insanity, it will be difficult to remove this defect in the education, of the majority of English medical practitioners.

In support of the opinion just stated, regarding the existing difficulties attending the proper mode of studying mental diseases, and the importance to the entire profession, of making some alteration in the present system, I can scarcely produce stronger evidence, than the following judicious remarks of Sir William Ellis, the late resident physician of the County Asylum at Hanwell, who says in a recent publication, "It is perfectly inconsistent with common sense to suppose, that a man shall intuitively know how to treat insanity. We have seen, that although in the greater number of cases it is attended with the same general result, yet it assumes most varied forms, and great care and discrimination are required in the treatment; indeed, it is universally acknowledged to be a most difficult and mysterious disease, and yet it is almost the only one on which the medical student receives no particular instruction. In his attendance on the hospitals, he will, in all probability, have met with almost every other variety of disease which afflicts human nature; at all events, his lectures will have supplied him with some information as to their treatment; but I believe that my friend and colleague, Dr. (now Sir Alexander) Morison, of Cavendish Square, is the only lecturer in London expressly on insanity.—Indeed, excepting as being incidently touched upon in the lectures on forensic medicine, it appears almost entirely neglected in the course of a medical education; and, as the subject does not form a branch



of examination, the pupils naturally employ their time in those studies which will be directly available, and assist them in the obtaining their medical certificates; the result is, that professional men, in other respects well educated, commence practice almost in a state of total ignorance on the subject. This is an evil from which every individual, whatever be his rank and fortune, is liable to suffer in his own person, and in that of his friends; and a man of ingenious mind can hardly be placed under more painful circumstances, than to find the father or mother of a family in a state of insanity, entrusted to his care, and to feel conscious that upon him depends the restoration of the patient to reason and happiness, whilst his want of acquaintance with the disease renders him unfit for the task, and he knows not where to apply for advice. This is by no means an imaginary evil, it is one of frequent occurrence, and numerous are the instances where amiable and valuable members of society are consigned for life, to a perpetual banishment from their friends in the gloom of a madhouse, solely from ignorance on the part of the medical adviser. This ought to be remedied." Words cannot better express the whole question at issue, and I hope, that an authority of such weight, will have its due influence, as well with the medical corporations, as with the managing committees of all the insane asylums in the empire.

The importance to medical practitioners of being thoroughly conversant with the pathology and curative treatment of mental affections, is now so generally admitted that it does not need, on the present occasion, much elucidation; whilst the frequency of this calamitous disease in England, makes it more necessary for physicians to be experienced in mania; besides the advantages accruing, not only to the poor sufferer, when deprived of the blessings of reason, but also to the relatives and friends of the patient, when such a malady is judiciously treated, renders the professional assistance of well qualified practitioners, of the greatest value under such distressing circumstances.

Considerable attention has, of late, been directed to the increased prevalence of insanity in Great Britain, and the Legislature has been frequently occupied with the subject, in order to protect the lunatic, and to procure them better treatment and accommodation. Much has, undoubtedly, been accomplished, with a view to alleviate the sufferings of that unfortunate class of society, but more remains to be effected; as well to promote the cure of so great

an affliction to humanity as the loss of reason, but, likewise, to extend the comforts of the poor sufferer, and ensure them that protection which they so much require. According to the best authorities on the subject, it appears the inhabitants of Great Britain are more liable to insanity than those of any other country in Europe, excepting Norway; and the further south we proceed, this malady becomes gradually less prevalent. Hence, throughout Italy and Spain, lunacy is much less common than in France or in England; whilst in Scotland, this deplorable disease is much more frequent, than in any other part of the British Empire.

Owing to the imperfect registration of lunatics, and also from defects in the existing laws relative to the surveillance of houses, where not more than one insane person is maintained, it is almost impossible to ascertain the actual number of individuals, who are deprived of reason in Great Britain. Nevertheless, taking the calculations of medical staticians as a guide, the number of lunatics and idiots in England and Wales, is upwards of 20,000; but in Scotland, where a higher ratio of insanity prevails, than in any other part of the country, being one lunatic to every 573 inhabitants; the number of insane persons in that kingdom, will be 4500, notwithstanding its smaller relative population. From these data, the aggregate amount of lunatics and idiots is about 25,000 for Great Britain, without including Ireland. However, within the metropolitan districts, it is more easy to learn the exact number of registered lunatics, living in or near London; and a sad account the inquiry furnishes, of the great prevalence of this malady. By the last Report of the Metropolitan Commissioners in lunacy, it appears 2490 insane patients were under their jurisdiction in 1841; at Hanwell, there are at present 960 lunatics and idiots; in Bethlem Hospital 342; in St. Luke's 220; and at the Surrey County Asylum, near Wandsworth, about 300, making a total of 4312 of our fellow-creatures deprived of the blessings of reason, in or about the metropolis; independent of single patients kept in private houses, whose amount it is not possible to ascertain with accuracy, as no data exists for any calculation.

Having such important facts respecting the frequency of mania, throughout every class of society in this country, no one will surely deny the great importance to the community, indeed the imperious necessity, of giving medical students every facility, to become properly educated, in the

knowledge of this deplorable disease, and its curative treatment; in order to be prepared, when they are afterwards engaged in practice, to direct the medical management of cases of insanity; whenever called upon to undertake that duty, in the course of their ordinary professional avocations.

Independent of the benefits patients affected with insanity must derive, when the nature and treatment of that malady is thoroughly understood; the difficulties so frequently experienced in commissions of inquiry, regarding the mental condition of an alleged lunatic, must, at the same time, not be overlooked; particularly when the important consequences are considered, which often result from the jury's decision, whereby the property, and future condition of the unfortunate individual is often materially affected, or his prospects in life even entirely blighted. On legal investigations of that description, considerable difference of opinion frequently prevails among the witnesses, and also the counsel engaged on the trial; whilst gentlemen of the long robe, and the medical men often disagree, regarding the true diagnostic symptoms of insanity; and even whether the party on trial is quite *compos mentis*, or actually insane. In such cases, especially if complicated by metaphysical, legal, or medical ingenuity, it sometimes becomes a very difficult matter for the jury to bring in a just verdict. As a proof, that exhibitions of the kind do take place, reference need only be made to the occurrences occasionally met with in commissions "*de lunatico inquirendo*," in which so great a difference of opinion is exhibited, that it might be almost said, the witnesses appeared as much in the character of advocates anxious to support a particular side, as to explain the facts of the case, they were called upon to elucidate.

Further, and as indicative of the necessity to study mental disease, it is worthy of notice, before any person can be consigned to an asylum as a lunatic, the law requires separate certificates from two medical practitioners, stating that the individual said to be insane, "is of unsound mind, and a proper person to be confined." Should these documents be irregularly granted, the writers are liable to prosecution; whilst investigations of that nature, shew the necessity of medical men being conversant with such questions; notwithstanding the avenues leading to the best store-houses of knowledge on insanity, are almost hermetically sealed to enquirers. But this anomaly is only one of many absurdities now prevalent, where a man is called upon to perform a very onerous duty, nay, might lose caste if

ignorant, yet every difficulty is thrown in the way of acquiring information.

Such are a few of the disadvantages consequent upon the imperfect knowledge, often prevailing respecting mental alienation; and although individual physicians may make the study of insanity, the object of their especial attention, so as to be well versed in the subject, they are only exceptions to the general rule; constituting, it must be acknowledged, an unsatisfactory state of matters, whether in respect of the public interests, or the medical profession. The latter of whom would, I feel assured, most willingly avail themselves of every favourable opportunity, to increase their knowledge on these important questions; whilst the public will assuredly allow, that the sooner effectual measures are taken, to correct this anomaly in medical education, by facilitating the investigation of mental diseases, in the wards of public establishments for the insane, all parties would be great gainers; seeing such an arrangement would confer essential benefits upon every class of the community.

The importance of a thorough knowledge of insanity to medical men, and the necessity of their possessing an intimate acquaintance with the curative measures, best suited for its removal, scarcely requires further illustration. Nevertheless, it may be remarked, as the indications of mental alienation sometimes appear, long prior to the full development of that complaint; it is, therefore, essential for the ordinary medical attendant of a family, to be fully conversant with the promonitory symptoms; because, if any suspicion exists, either from hereditary tendency or other indications, that an attack of mania is imminent, these symptoms ought neither to be overlooked, nor any unnecessary delay allowed to take place, before employing the means best adapted to prevent, if possible, the threatened malady; or, at least, to promote its ultimate cure. In this calamitous disease, the early treatment is of much more importance, than may be perhaps believed, and it is certainly often far more effectual than at any subsequent stage of the complaint; whilst experience verifies the remark, that the more recent the attack of mania, and the sooner judicious remedies are employed, so will the treatment more likely prove advantageous. Besides this important consideration, no valid reason exists, why the ordinary medical adviser of a family, should not always undertake the management of mental affections, quite as readily as any other disease. Indeed, such an anomaly in medical practice appears absurd, if not indicative of profes-

sional ignorance, the very suspicion of which ought no longer to continue. Other reasons, showing the advantage of medical practitioners being conversant with the management of mental diseases, might be also noticed if necessary; but it will suffice to allude at present, only to the unpleasant feelings, sometimes excited in the minds of relatives, if not of the patient, when, instead of the usual medical adviser superintending the treatment, another practitioner is called in, who confines himself entirely to the treatment of cases of insanity. Any person living in society well knows, the uneasiness created by its being hinted abroad, that either Dr. A. or Dr. B., both eminent physicians in the treatment of madness, is attending a particular individual; the very report of such a circumstance is painful to relatives, especially, should the ominous carriage of one of these gentlemen be seen near the patient's dwelling. This is not an exaggeration, or a matter of indifference, but indicates a proper sensitiveness, meriting due consideration. And although it is often advantageous, especially in consultations, to have the opinion of a physician, who gives his attention principally to the investigation and management of mental diseases, it is not the less desirable, that every medical practitioner should be competent, by previous study, to treat these complaints, quite as efficiently, as any other malady affecting the human constitution.

Since no doubt can reasonably exist, regarding the advantages which would ensue to medical men, and to society at large, by improving the present defective state of medical education, in relation to insanity, the only question therefore, now requiring investigation, is the best way for effecting the requisite alterations. On this head, the same method usually pursued in the study of other branches of medical science, apply with equal force to this particular class of diseases; namely, the student must acquire practical knowledge and experience in mania, through the medium of lectures; and also learn properly to apply the doctrines he has been taught, by attendance at the bedside of patients affected with mental diseases; because, in that way, the future practitioner can alone properly qualify himself, for the arduous duties he must afterwards undertake. To attempt effecting that object, by any other mode, would only lead to disappointment, tend to perpetuate ignorance, and prevent real improvement. Reading will, no doubt, considerably assist the student in investigating affections of the mind; but that method of study will not be sufficient, for without actual ob-

servation of this disease, when variously affecting the human constitution, any knowledge otherwise obtained, is neither so available in practice, nor will prove so useful to the patient, as experience acquired from personal attendance upon insane patients; especially, when that mode of study is pursued, under the guidance of experienced teachers, and those accustomed to instruct their junior brethren, in the wards of an hospital. That is the true way to acquire knowledge; and an amateur traveller might as well pretend to speak with authority, regarding the customs of a foreign country, or the character of its inhabitants, merely from whatever second-hand knowledge, he may have acquired during closet tours, with a book in his hand; as it would be for a physician, to undertake the treatment of an important class of diseases, without having previously seen patients labouring under the particular malady, he is called upon to attend. To adopt any other course, would be quite as irrational, as if the student were to attempt to learn anatomy without dissecting the human body, or to understand the great principles of chemistry entirely from books, unaided by actual experiments.

From these remarks, it follows, that the most useful method to adopt, for improving the knowledge of medical men in mental diseases, would be, in the first place, to open the doors of our great public hospitals for the reception of the insane; as, for instance, St. Luke's, Hanwell, and Bethlem, to medical students under proper regulations, when desirous of investigating insanity, in the extensive fields for study, which these institutions contain. It ought likewise to be imperative on the medical corporations, prior to granting their diploma, to exact attendance in such hospitals for a limited period, and also at lectures on the nature, pathology, and curative treatment proper for that class of maladies. However, if this recommendation should be adopted, the expense entailed upon the medical student ought not to be considerable, lest the object proposed, might thereby be materially interfered with, or even perhaps defeated.

Bethlem Hospital, being pre-eminent for its excellent arrangements, and having extensive wards, containing generally from 320 to 340 patients, is an institution admirably adapted for the purpose of obtaining instruction; and being principally intended for the reception of insane patients, who are considered of a curable description, although not exclusively so, since there are likewise incurables and criminal lunatics; that Hospital, therefore, possesses

many advantages for the purposes of study, over other establishments, in which every description of patients, whether curable or otherwise, are received. The attendance of medical students, in the wards of such an extensive hospital as Bethlem, having a great variety of insane patients constantly under treatment, and where from five to six new patients are admitted every week, would therefore be most useful; particularly when compared with other lunatic asylums, containing paralytic, epileptic, and incurable lunatics or idiots, almost indiscriminately. Of course, cases of that melancholy description, are by no means unimportant to the medical student, and ought likewise to be investigated by the diligent inquirer, in order to alleviate if possible their sufferings, however hopeless any prospect of their cure may appear. But as the majority of medical practitioners are more likely, in the course of their professional practice, to be called upon to treat the less severe, and curable varieties of insanity, than cases of a chronic description, correct knowledge of the ordinary forms of recent disease, is therefore most important; and considering it will be admitted, that few institutions are better adapted for studying mania in every variety, than Bethlem Hospital, such reasoning applies with peculiar force to that institution. In addition to these advantages, it ought to be recollected, that the medical officers of the establishment, being men of great experience and acquirements in their particular departments; that there is a resident apothecary in constant attendance upon the patients, an experienced steward, and also a matron, who, to great kindness of manner and firmness of character, possesses other qualities eminently adapted for the superintendant of female lunatics, with functionaries for each department, little is really wanting at Bethlem Hospital, to make the establishment in every way useful, but a more free admission of students to the wards of the hospital, whereby the ultimate benefits accruing to society, may be extensively disseminated.

How the prohibition to study so important a class of disease as insanity at public institutions intended for the cure of that complaint, has arisen, and continued to exist for so long a period, it is difficult to understand. Perhaps it may have originated partly, from those very excusable feelings common to human nature, prompting mankind to throw a veil of obscurity, and even of mystery, around all who have suffered from this calamitous complaint, so that the future prospects in life of such unfortunate victims, may

not be blighted. Or the exclusion may have arisen from the cautious policy of the lay governors of lunatic asylums, and their unwillingness to change existing regulations; whilst the lukewarmness of the medical profession generally upon this question, may have also contributed to let matters remain as hitherto; at the same time, the non-activity of physicians attached to institutions for the insane, with a few exceptions, have tended to produce a similar result. But a new light has at last broken in upon the managers, of some of our great public establishments for lunatics, which has been responded to by others; and, however slow the progress of reform may yet advance, the cause of medical science and public utility, will ultimately prevail over every obstacle.

When the anatomy question was first brought before the medical profession, with a view to remedy the great difficulties formerly obstructing the acquisition of knowledge, in that important part of medical education, which constitutes the very foundation of medicine and surgery; notwithstanding the lukewarmness of some, and the fears of others, lest public feeling might be excited against the proposed innovation; the opposition of interested parties and public bodies were of no avail; and that excellent measure was carried triumphantly through parliament, with very general approbation. Looking back to the beginning of that discussion, and remembering the few uninfluential individuals who, with myself, drew up the resolutions and petition to parliament, passed at the Westminster Medical Society in 1829, which was among the first demonstrations in favour of a change in the existing laws, relative to abolishing the dissection of criminals, as also the supply of subjects to the medical schools; I am encouraged by the success of that question, against much prejudice and interested opposition, to entertain no fears respecting the ultimate fate of the present proposition, provided its utility to the community is fully established. Delayed the cause may be for a time, and opposition it will encounter; but whenever the advantages accruing to society, from a more extensive knowledge of insanity by medical practitioners are better understood, the change now advocated must ultimately triumph.

Objections may, perhaps, be taken by the governors, lest the excitement and noise occasioned by the attendance of pupils, in the wards of Bethlem Hospital with the physicians, might produce injurious effects upon the patients, especially upon the females. Undoubtedly indiscriminate admission, or permitting crowds of visitors at irregular



hours, would not be judicious; and, in some instances, it might be attended by injurious consequences to individual patients, when affected by mental alienation; but in the great majority of cases, no serious injury could arise from the physicians being accompanied, during their professional visits, by several medical pupils; indeed, the danger appears to my mind to be very slight, if not imaginary. In general hospitals, especially in those of the metropolis, although some of the patients are suffering from acute diseases, and others have recently undergone serious operations, nevertheless a number of individuals often accompany the physician or surgeon, during their ordinary visits to the wards, for the purpose of studying the disease, and of witnessing the medical treatment pursued; besides, from the attendance of pupils in the surgical wards, or at the performance of operations, as now permitted, it can scarcely be asserted, that the patients have suffered any injury in consequence. On the contrary, it will be allowed, that much good has thereby resulted to the medical profession, and to society, from the superior education and practical experience young men thus obtain, as it qualifies them to act more successfully as practitioners, when the health of individuals is committed to their care.

Although the governors may, perhaps, be unwilling to concede the principle of allowing an increased number of medical pupils to frequent the wards of Bethlem Hospital, for the sole purpose of study, and of thus qualifying themselves to become afterwards more useful to the community; there prevails little or no disposition at present, to prevent visitors from seeing the interior arrangements of that excellent establishment. The Secretary of State, or the President, may give an order of admission to visitors; or a Governor may, at all reasonable hours, conduct strangers over the house; and in this way, sometimes as many as fifteen or twenty persons, even including ladies, have preambulated the wards at the same time, some of whom, perhaps, only came to gratify idle curiosity. In former years, during the existence of the old hospital in Moorfields, a visit to Bedlam used to be considered one of the usual sights of London, constituting a strange propensity truly; but nevertheless, then a very prevalent one; and all introduction at that time required, was the payment of a very small sum of money at the door, almost as if at an ordinary exhibition. According to an account of Bethlem Hospital, published in 1783, by the chaplain of the institu-

tion, the Rev. Thomas Bowen, a revenue of at least 400*l.* per annum, was obtained from the indiscriminate admission of visitants to the hospital, whom very often, an idle and wanton curiosity drew to that region of distress. As each person paid about one penny, by the calculation of the Committee of the 12th March, 1742; about ninety thousand visitors were sometimes admitted in one year. The crowd was often so great, that to prevent disturbances, the porter was annually made a constable, and attended with the other servants to keep order. But this abuse became so general, and the injurious consequences to patients so apparent, that in 1770, all indiscriminate admission to visit Bedlam was most properly forbidden. And although desirous to admit pupils at Bethlem Hospital, under proper regulations, for the purpose of pursuing their studies; I am very far from considering, that the idle visits of strangers, from mere morbid curiosity should be allowed, since that cannot be beneficial; particularly, as the patients themselves often dislike being paraded before their fellow-creatures, in some degree like the inmates of a menagerie.

If the same exclusive system now prevailing at St. Luke's, Bethlem, and at almost every other hospital for the insane, respecting the admission of pupils, were also followed at the general hospitals in the kingdom, the injurious consequences inflicted upon society, by such an absurd proceeding, would be most disastrous, in consequence of the imperfect education, which medical practitioners must then inevitably receive. Because, if admission to general hospitals, for the purpose of studying disease, were denied to students, they would be entirely debarred from pursuing in the best manner, that part of their education, which can only be learned at the bedside of patients, and from clinical instruction. If the point be therefore granted, that great benefits result to the community, from the admission of pupils to the wards of hospitals, whether general, lying-in, fever, or of whatever description; it must be conceded upon similar principles, that insane institutions if supported by public subscription, or endowed, like Bethlem Hospital, with large revenues arising from real property, and, especially, after receiving large grants of money from Government, as also an annual allowance for criminal lunatics; they certainly ought to be made subservient to the good of the community, quite as much as St. Bartholomew's, Guy's, or the County Hospitals. Public utility must always counterbalance individual inconvenience; and

seeing the many practical benefits resulting to the community, from the system now followed at these receptacles for the sick ; a somewhat similar plan should be acted upon, at every public lunatic asylum.

So far from considering, that the judicious admission of pupils, and of young men who are about completing their preliminary studies, to the wards of Bethlem Hospital, would prove injurious to the inmates, I believe, if properly regulated, such permission would even sometimes act advantageously. This opinion is founded upon the supposition, that the regular visits of the physicians, although accompanied by pupils, would in most of the patients, tend rather to distract the attention from their false reasoning, whilst in others, it would appear as if bringing them in contact with the external world, and so produce a more favourable effect upon their disordered imaginations. Besides the appearance thus given to the establishment, of being somewhat like an ordinary hospital, for the restoration to health of its inmates, instead of a common mad house, in which all contact with the world outside its walls is generally cut off, might have a beneficial impression ; especially as it is a well known observation, that the fear of being placed in a lunatic asylum, often exerts an injurious influence upon the minds even of the insane ; to say nothing of the very disagreeable associations, which it produces upon friends and relatives.

The system pursued on the Continent respecting public hospitals, whether for the insane, or otherwise, is very different from that followed in this country. For example, throughout the whole Austrian dominions, every hospital for the sick is made subservient to the instruction of medical students ; and in France, as in other countries, great facilities for study likewise prevail. At the Salpêtrière in Paris, pupils are freely admitted, and M. Esquirol frequently gave lectures to as many as fifty auditors, whilst some of the patients were even brought before the pupils, for the express purpose of illustrating the various forms of this disease, and the particular points alluded to by the lecturer. There was no limitation whatever in the admission of pupils, and a number of them often accompanied the physician, when visiting the wards ; as also at Bicêtre, where an equally liberal admission to students is permitted, for the purpose of seeing and studying mental diseases in that establishment. Inconvenience might occasionally occur from the numerous attendance in the wards, especially in those for female pa-

tients; and some might say, that individual cases suffered injury, from the noise and excitement thus produced, in the insane hospitals at Paris; but no injurious effect is likely to occur in this country from the admission of students, if the privilege be properly regulated. Should any thing of the kind however take place, it could be easily avoided, by keeping the excitable patients in separate apartments, to which pupils were not admitted. Or a regulation similar to that followed in the Edinburgh Infirmary, and at some other hospitals, might be adopted; that is, a selection of the cases, best suited for clinical instruction, could be placed in particular wards open to students, whilst patients requiring quiet and seclusion were otherwise accommodated. An arrangement of this description, would likely obviate every objection, which could be made to a more free admission of medical pupils, into the wards of Bethlem Hospital than heretofore, besides being admirably adapted for the purpose of advancing medical education. But if the Governors concede the general principle now advocated, the details will be soon settled, and without any difficulty.

Regarding the practice of admitting pupils to the hospitals for insane patients in France, and the effects of that permission upon the inmates, those who have visited the medical schools of Paris, can bear ample testimony. Many opinions might be quoted, but I shall confine myself to the following valuable remarks, contained in a letter recently received from that able physiologist and talented physician, Dr. Combe, of Edinburgh, which are so conclusive in favour of the proposed innovation, that having permission to give them publicity, I beg leave to submit the reasoning and experience of that gentleman, to the Governors of Bethlem Hospital, trusting so good an example as the one alluded to, may have its own due influence. The opinion of such an authority as Dr. Combe is important, and must carry great weight; since he is not only a member of the Medical Board of the Royal Edinburgh Lunatic Asylum, but the author of several celebrated works, and has written some excellent Remarks on the moral management of the Insane; consequently, few persons are better entitled to decide upon the subject under discussion, than the writer alluded to, who says, in his letter to myself, "The safety and even advantage to the patients, from the admission of pupils, is fortunately not a matter of mere conjecture. I had the good fortune to attend the first clinical course ever given on the subject of insanity, by the celebrated Esquirol, at the Salpêtrière at Paris in the spring of 1819. I antici-

pated confusion and excitement, from the indiscriminate admission of all who chose to attend (for there was no restriction whatever), but instead of that, the patients seemed amused and interested, and during the whole three months, I never saw one instance of any excitement, or other unfavourable result. On the contrary, the visit was expected with pleasure by many, and Esquirol's kind, friendly way of addressing them, and then turning round, to make a good-natured remark to the students, had a manifestly soothing and beneficial effect. Of course, the students behaved with propriety and good-humoured forbearance also, and consequently were not regarded with the suspicion, which used to be excited in the olden time by the admission of visitors, who come to stare as at wild beasts. The number of students who went round with Esquirol at that time, averaged from thirty to fifty, and no confusion of any kind occurred. I visited Charenton and Ivry with Esquirol in the autumn of 1831, and up to that time, he gave the same testimony concerning the advantages, to both patients and pupils, from the above plan; and I believe, at Bicêtre also clinical lectures have been given, and students freely admitted for some years. I have devoted much attention to insanity, ever since I attended Esquirol's clinique in 1819, and every day's experience has added to my conviction of the necessity, even for the advantage of the patients, of admitting pupils to our asylums, under proper regulations. The attending physician would, of course, prohibit access to any who might in his opinion be injured by it, just as is done in the case of acute diseases in ordinary hospitals. If there was any chance of an overflow of pupils (an unlikely thing in my opinion), it would be easy to divide them into several classes, each to have admission to certain wards only. It is no advantage to a student to have scores of patients under his eye, at the same time. Infinitely more instructive is it, to confine his observations to such a number, as his mind can easily embrace, so as to digest and comprehend their peculiarities. To benefit by his opportunities, he must not only observe, but think and compare, and in doing so, the physician may help him most efficiently, by a few judicious remarks." As any comments of mine, might impair the force of these conclusive observations, I will only add, that if arguments can avail, the above reasoning, from being based upon experience, ought to shew the groundless nature of the fears, still entertained by some benevolent, but I think mistaken individuals, who believe the patients of public lunatic asylums would be injured, by making these

institutions available to the instruction of pupils, just completing their medical education; although they allow, it would promote improvement in the treatment of the insane; the necessity for which, no one doubts or attempts to gainsay, at the present time.

Formerly, it was the general practice, to exclude lunatics as much as possible, from all contact with their fellow-men, and even in many instances, to consign such unfortunate beings to beds of straw, to chains, and in dungeons. Happily however, in this country at least, such cruelties are now almost unknown, especially in the Metropolitan districts, where a more humane, as well as a more successful mode of management, is at present pursued. Nevertheless, not many years ago, the poor afflicted maniac, instead of being always considered an object of commiseration, on account of his helpless condition, and although deprived of the guiding power of reason, was almost thought to be devoid of many of the ordinary feelings of human nature. Consequently, some ignorant people even believed, that lunatics could neither feel cold nor hunger, and that they were almost insensible to pain; at least, treatment which would certainly have been considered cruelty, if exercised towards reasonable beings, was thought to be justifiable, when the object was to cure a fellow-creature, suffering from the accumulated miseries of poverty and mental alienation. But fortunately for human nature, such erroneous doctrines, although but too prevalent in the olden time, are now repudiated by every humane individual; whilst kindness, with a due regard for the safety, and physical comforts of the insane; as well as their moral treatment, including amusement with judicious employments, are now considered, in most cases, indispensable for promoting convalescence.

Again, as a writer observes, the more lunatics are congregated together in the same place, so will the advantages appear, of exercising their remaining intelligence, by slight occupations or distractions; for if left entirely to themselves, insane patients are very apt to be seized with some fixed, and generally erroneous ideas; whereby they are apt to become indifferent, and to impose little or no restraint to indulgence in their false impressions. But when their train of false ideas are interrupted by other impressions, and if the lunatic be called upon, to take a more or less active part in some intellectual occupation; the mental faculties of the insane, may be thus considerably awakened, and their judgment even improved, so as to promote the patient's

recovery. Seclusion from all communication with our fellow men is very apt to produce insanity ; and although it is often desirable, to separate those afflicted with mental alienation from their immediate relations, and to remove them to new situations, quite different from those they were accustomed to frequent, previous to the appearance of their mental malady ; it is equally well-known, that by occupying the attention of the insane, with objects and pursuits opposed to the false ideas, usually engaging their minds, a new impetus may be given to their trains of thought, and so free the patient for a moment from his disease, whereby the intellect may acquire additional force, and thus establish their ultimate recovery.

In illustration of the principle, that moderate occupation of the mind, when judiciously employed, instead of allowing patients deprived of reason, to brood constantly over their delusions, are followed by beneficial results ; better evidence cannot be furnished, than the results obtained in the French hospitals ; at Hanwell, and also from Bethlem, where this system of occupying the patients has been introduced. At Bicêtre, a teacher of music was appointed in 1839, and reading, writing, as well as dancing are now taught ; whilst workshops have been established ; in fact, every effort is made, to engage the attention of the lunatic, in some innocent or agreeable occupation. The same system has been found equally useful, in other lunatic establishments, and especially at Bethlem Hospital ; where, under the judicious management of the matron, Mrs. Hunter, many of the females are now engaged in various occupations, which are both an amusement, and conducive to their restoration to health ; whilst in the male wards, under the able superintendence of the steward, Mr. Nicholls, painters, gardeners, carpenters, and other tradesmen, with even smiths, are now occupied in their respective employments, to some extent ; and this plan is about being carried into more extensive operation than hitherto, and will act beneficially. Besides, these bodily occupations for the patients, mental recreation is not neglected ; as a reading room will soon be completed, having a judicious selection of books ; and a piano is also to be purchased ; in short, the march of improvement is progressive. Important facts like these, strongly prove the advances making in the modern system, instead of relying upon coercion, or non-occupation of the patients. Of course, when an insane person is either dangerous to others, or might inflict injury upon himself, then the propriety of

giving occupation to such patients, does not apply to the same extent, and restraint may in that case become necessary. Into such an interesting inquiry, as the propriety of restraint in mental alienation, this is not the place to enter at length; nevertheless, I would remark in passing, much good has been effected by recent discussions on that subject; and whatever may be the opinions of physicians, the real and permanent benefit of patients, not dogmatic assertions unsupported by experience, ought to have influence in deciding so important a question. But enough has been now stated to shew, that intercourse with others, whether through the medium of physicians and medical students, or by engaging the patients' minds in some intellectual or manual occupation, instead of producing any injurious consequences on the insane, as many may still believe, quite a contrary effect will often ensue.

At the Gloucester Lunatic Asylum, the principle of amusing and giving occupation to insane patients, has been carried into operation to a considerable extent, and apparently with very beneficial results, according to the subjoined extract from the statement of the visiting Committee of 1841; which among other remarks, says,

“ Balls and other amusements, occurring in Lunatic Asylums, have been of late publicly mentioned as matter of admiration and astonishment. In this Asylum, large parties for dancing have always been promoted; as well as dinner and evening parties, when proper, and pleasurable excursions, for many hours, in the country. Musical entertainments within the walls, and attendance on public amusements, are of so frequent occurrence, that they constitute the practice, rather than form the occasional source of astonishment in this Asylum. Indeed, to so great an extent does our superintendent endeavour to make his patients feel that they belong to the great community of mankind, and are only temporarily separated for their health's sake, that he encourages a great proportion to attend to their religious duties, on Sundays, in the places of worship in the city and neighbourhood; and induces all who can or will separate themselves from the Asylum, to take their exercise in the surrounding country; whilst, to give encouragement to those who are inclined to be industrious, he employs all he can, *without* the walls, in various ways, and cultivates nearly twenty acres with the spade in the fields adjoining and belonging to the Asylum, with scarcely any other check upon their escape, beyond the good feeling subsisting between himself and them.” From similar Institutions



other examples might be quoted, but it is unnecessary to prolong the discussion; as the benefits are now generally admitted, which accrue to the insane from judicious occupation and amusement.

Comparing the present improved treatment of patients at Bethlem Hospital, with the system which prevailed in even very recent times, it therefore becomes the more desirable, that a knowledge of the mode of management now pursued in that, as in every well regulated insane establishment, should be as extensively diffused as possible, for the benefit of the public, and the medical profession. And here, it is a pleasing duty to contrast the condition of the patients in Bethlem Hospital, and the mode of treatment now pursued, with that prevailing even at the beginning of the present century, or before much public attention was directed to the subject of insanity. Thus, in 1811, Dr. Black remarks, when speaking of Bedlam, that "Separate confinement in their cells, straight waistcoats, and in the ferocious maniac, handcuffs and chains, soon render them (the patients) tractable and obedient." Dr. Black also says, "that a very small number even of the incurables, are kept as wild beasts, constantly in fetters." Again, when Mr. Wakefield visited Bedlam on the 1st of May, 1815, according to the parliamentary report, he states amongst other circumstances, that, "One side-room contained about ten female patients, each chained, by one arm or leg to the wall; the nakedness of each patient being covered by a blanket gown only, and the feet even were naked. Many of these unfortunate women were locked up in their cells, naked and chained, on straw; with only one blanket for a covering. On the men's side of the house, in a side room, six patients were chained close to the wall; five handcuffed, and locked to the wall. All were naked, except as to the blanket gown, or a small rug on the shoulders, and without shoes. The room appeared like a dog kennel. Chains are invariably substituted for the straight waistcoat. Some were lying stark naked upon straw; and about one fifth were in this state, or chained." What a sad picture this account furnishes of the cruel usage, and injurious treatment pursued not many years ago, towards the unfortunate maniacs; and it is not surprising, if some of the patients, as Dr. Black states, were ferocious, and kept constantly in fetters; indeed, such harsh measures were quite sufficient to render any one furiously insane, and to convert curable into incurable lunatics. Fortunately, however, for poor afflicted humanity, an improved mode of treatment has since then been adopted.

and if either Dr. Black or Mr. Wakefield, were again to visit Bethlem in the year 1842, they would doubtless be as much pleased with the far more humane system now pursued, as they would also be highly gratified, with the beneficial results it produces.

Numerous facts, illustrative of the improvements recently adopted, in the curative treatment of the insane at this establishment might be stated, were it necessary to pursue the investigation any farther; but as the object proposed in these observations, was to point out the advantages of giving additional facilities for studying insanity, rather than to investigate the most judicious mode of management, or the various remedies proper to be employed in treating that disease; the examples just given, of the system formerly pursued at old Bethlem Hospital, but which is fortunately obsolete in the new, have been brought forward merely as arguments, in favour of opening the doors of that institution more widely than heretofore. Believing, that the more extensively sound principles, regarding the management of the insane are diffused, the greater benefits will be conferred on suffering human nature; and should the observations contained in these pages, tend to attract attention to the question now discussed, one of the objects contemplated will have been attained. And although I am not so sanguine as to expect, that old prejudices and customs, however injurious they may sometimes act upon society, can be suddenly removed; nevertheless, the wants of the community, and the general benefit of mankind, will ultimately triumph over every difficulty; and however contrary to previous practice, or opposed to usually received opinions, I do not despair of the ultimate adoption of the proposed innovation. Attention has been directed to the subject, the medical profession appear to approve of the principle; and the more its advantages are considered, the objections which might be urged against the plan, seem to diminish; whilst the proposition, if carried into effect, would render our great public institutions, for the reception of the insane, not only useful to their afflicted inmates, but make them still farther conducive, to the interests of the whole community.

Notwithstanding the principle of permitting pupils to visit the insane patients in Bethlem Hospital, along with the physicians, has already been partially established; nevertheless, the application of this rule is of too limited a description, to be of considerable benefit, as only three are allowed;

and the expense being much beyond the pecuniary means of most medical students, the number is not always complete. Besides, lectures are not given at this hospital, although there are ample means for such an undertaking; and the qualifications of the medical officers, to impart instruction to pupils, will be readily acknowledged; indeed, one of the present physicians, Sir A. Morison, commenced lecturing on the nature, causes, and treatment of mental diseases in London, nearly twenty years ago; and these lectures were the only regular course delivered on that subject, in the kingdom.

Again, at St. Luke's, notwithstanding one of the objects proposed at the foundation of that charity, according to the original address in 1751, was "of introducing more gentlemen of the faculty, to the study and practice of one of the most important branches of physic;" medical pupils are not now admitted at that hospital, having upwards of 200 lunatic patients, however eminently qualified the present medical officers may be, for conveying instruction to young men, on the management and curative treatment of mental diseases. But exclusive as the system actually prevailing at St. Luke's may appear, the Governors of that charity were much more liberal, in allowing pupils to visit the patients in the hospital, at the middle of the eighteenth, than they are in the nineteenth century. This retrograde movement is singular, since at the period mentioned, Dr. William Battie, a celebrated and talented physician, then attached to St. Luke's Hospital, states in the preface to a Treatise on Madness, which he published in 1758, that "by an unanimous vote, the Governors signified their inclination of admitting young physicians, well recommended, to visit the hospital, and freely to observe the treatment of the patients confined." And, moreover, the author also says, he "offered to the perusal of the gentlemen, who honoured him with their attendance, the reasons of those prescriptions, which were submitted to their observation." Nothing could be better adapted for the instruction of young medical practitioners, than the method then pursued at St. Luke's, and much credit is certainly due to Dr. Battie for his zeal, as likewise to the Governors for granting the above permission. The publication alluded to, and perhaps also, the innovation respecting the admission of pupils to the wards of St. Luke's, involved the author in a dispute with Dr. John Munro, physician to Bethlem Hospital, who affixed to a small volume he wrote, entitled "Remarks on Dr. Battie's

Treatise on Madness;" the line from Horace, "O major, tandem parcas, Insane, minori;" whereby the wits of the day, ever afterwards designated the Doctor, as *Major Battie*. The laugh may have then been on the side of the Bethlem physician, but utility and reason belonged to St. Luke's. When or wherefore this permission, to visit the wards of that hospital, was withdrawn; or if still in force, why it is not acted upon, I know not, although the circumstance deserves explanation. But I hope a new era will soon arrive, when more liberal sentiments regarding lunatic asylums, being made subservient to the advancement of medical education, may prevail, particularly at public institutions like St. Luke's and Bethlem Hospitals.

The views now advocated, respecting public institutions, for the reception of lunatics, being made useful in educating individuals, to whom the care and treatment of insane patients are committed, has already been partially acted upon; and at the Gloucester Asylum, already alluded to, it is stated "a limited number of officers of both sexes, in the double capacity of assistants and students, are received into the establishment. Those of the male, to be medical gentlemen, who have completed their professional education; and those of the female, young ladies of good education and manners. This system has been commenced, and as far as such officers have been appointed, has proved very satisfactory." This is a very good commencement of a new method; but it is in the Metropolis, where useful improvements ought to be carried out to their full extent, in this as in other branches of medical education.

In addition to that example, since the first edition of these observations was published, the present talented resident Physician of the Middlesex County Lunatic Asylum, Dr. Conolly, has commenced delivering, gratuitously, a course of lectures on mental diseases, to medical pupils from the different London hospitals. This important step in medical education, will prove, doubtless, of much advantage to the younger members of the medical profession, and constitutes almost a new epoch in the management of the Metropolitan Lunatic Asylums; since, such a course of lectures makes these useful institutions, in addition to their present purposes, likewise conducive to the advancement of knowledge, respecting a disease of very great interest, to all who are engaged in the study and practice of medicine.

Besides the advantages of these lectures, such an excellent proposal is both highly creditable to Dr. Conolly, and to

the visiting justices sanctioning the proposition; whilst it affords an important practical illustration of the principles enforced in the previous observations. And although the distance from town, must always be a diffinity in the way of attendance of pupils at that institution, since medical students have often little time to spare, during the usual period allotted to their attendance on lectures; nevertheless, the opportunity thus liberally afforded to young men, of obtaining useful information, on the curative treatment of insanity, is most valuable, and forms an excellent beginning in the road of improvement. The example now set at Hanwell ought to be followed at other public institutions for the reception of lunatics; and were the wards of Bethlem and St. Luke's Hospitals opened to the admission of medical pupils, at a moderate fee, and lectures, with clinical instruction, also given, the objects now contemplated in these pages, would be amply accomplished. At the same time, the improved modes of treatment recently pursued in these extensive insane establishments, would be made more generally known than at present; whilst old prejudices, or any defects still existing in the management of any of the above institutions, would be ameliorated by the increased publicity thus given, as also by the more general surveillance of the public, and the medical profession.

Connected with the subject of allowing medical students about completing their professional education, to attend at Bethlem Hospital, or any other public insane institution, for the purpose of investigating mental diseases, and thus acquiring practical knowledge in their curative treatment; perhaps a few remarks respecting the kind of accommodation, most conducive to the recovery of patients affected with mania, will not be superfluous, or considered irrevelant to the previous discussion. When mental alienation supervenes, the individuals affected are either sent to a public hospital like Bethlem, and the County Asylums, or to a private establishment, which is usually kept by a medical practitioner; and sometimes the patient is placed in a house where only one lunatic is maintained, or he may remain at home with his relatives. Many considerations must influence the friends of a person labouring under insanity, in selecting the place or accommodation believed most likely to promote convalescence. Station in life, pecuniary means, and various collateral circumstances, must always affect this decision, but into these points it is here unnecessary to enter; my present object being not so much to discuss the sub-

ject generally, as to draw attention to the advantages which would accrue, if there were institutions for the reception of insane patients belonging to the middle and upper ranks of society, of a somewhat similar kind to Bethlem Hospital, where the moral and medical treatment of the insane, might be assimilated, to the system now adopted in properly conducted asylums.

The number of persons above poverty, but who are unable to contribute much of their pecuniary means, towards the care and keeping of an imbecile relative, is more considerable than many may perhaps suppose; and to apply like paupers for admission into Bethlem or St. Luke's, is often painful to the feelings of friends, and contrary to what they think is due to the afflicted patients themselves. Under these circumstances, the parties are obliged from necessity, either to keep the patient at home, or to incur an expenditure at a private establishment, which the relations are scarcely able to sustain. Institutions partly of the kind alluded to, already exist in some parts of the country, as for instance, the Dundee Asylum, the one at Gloucester, and others; but there is no public institution appropriated for the reception of persons, belonging to the middle and upper classes of society, within my knowledge, at present in London, where insane patients could be admitted at certain stipulated rates, according to the applicant's means, and commensurate with the accommodation or comforts supplied to the inmates.

To direct attention to this desideratum, forms the chief object of the present remarks; and although some cases of mania do not require separation from relatives, or a change of scene, whilst there are others in which no real necessity exists, for the treatment or seclusion of an asylum; indeed in certain cases, any proceeding of the kind might render a mild or incipient attack, either severe or confirmed; nevertheless, it is often highly desirable to place the patient in a public asylum, in order to be properly accommodated and medically treated, at a moderate expense. It is to such individuals, that an asylum of the kind alluded to would prove a great boon, as it must be likewise to respectable patients, whose means are limited, and whose case required retirement or a change of scene.

The high ratio of cures often effected in public asylums, in comparison with the number of admissions, is a strong argument in favour of establishments, like St. Luke's and Bethlem. Thus, at the former hospital, the proportion of cures was  $59\frac{1}{5}$  per cent. in 1841, and 64 per cent. for 1842;

at Bethlem, where many criminal lunatics are confined, it was under 59 per cent. during last year; and at the Gloucester Asylum, the cures in the private patients amounted to 62 per cent. What may be the ratio of recoveries in establishments, the property of individuals, it is almost impossible to ascertain; but the above statements show the beneficial results obtained at public institutions. Another point should also be noticed, connected with this subject, namely, if any disposition to suicide manifests itself in the maniac, or if disposed to inflict injury upon others, the surveillance exercised even by the patients themselves, over each other, in well regulated asylums, often proves a preventive; since it is observed, that lunatics inclined to self-destruction, are sometimes restrained from giving way to their propensity, when surrounded by other patients; whose company, therefore, not only acts as a safeguard, but proves a distraction, tending to interrupt their usual trains of thought, or check their diseased mental manifestations. Respecting the rarity of suicides in public asylums, it is worth mentioning, that out of 4216 lunatics received into Bethlem Hospital from the 31st December, 1822, to the 1st June, 1842, five instances of the kind have occurred, or one suicide in 843 insane persons; whilst half the patients admitted were discharged cured, and only 215 deaths are reported, or within a fraction of 5 per cent. These facts speak volumes in favour of Bethlem Hospital; and if similar results are met with, at other lunatic establishments, there cannot be any question as to benefits conferred upon the insane, by public institutions appropriated solely for their reception and curative treatment.

The judicious occupation of the patients, their classification, and the proper adaptation of amusements, to promote recovery, are besides much more easily carried into operation in large, than in limited institutions. Further, as private influences are less likely to act upon the superintendant, and responsible committee of management in a public, than at an establishment, where a different system exists; therefore, instead of keeping patients any longer in the house, than is necessary to their cure, the great anxiety would be, to restore them to their friends and to society, as speedily as possible.

Of course, as an institution of the kind, now casually mentioned, is intended for patients who would pay a proper remuneration for their treatment; the dietary and other arrangements would, necessarily, be of a much superior

description, either to St. Luke's or Bethlem Hospitals. However, as the present remarks are merely made to draw attention to the subject, of having public asylums for insane persons belonging to the better classes of society, it is superfluous to enter now into details, seeing, it will be time enough to discuss minor considerations, after the general principle is conceded.

To show the advantages, which public asylums possess over private establishments, for the cure of insane patients, and their capabilities, to ensure kind treatment to those who are incurable, the following paragraph from the recent Report of the Gloucester Lunatic Asylum, furnishes very strong testimony in favour of this proposition. In that document it is said, "The visitors cannot refrain from urging upon those whose relatives are afflicted with insanity, to seek rather the public than the private asylum. They urge still more, the taking this step in the *early stage*, when the disease has not been tampered with by inexperience, or rendered hopeless by delay—for it is amongst the few regrets which the retrospect of past years affords, that the most painful cases have ever been those, in which one or other of these misfortunes has befallen. While it is an acknowledged fact, that of those who are sent within two or three weeks of the commencement of the malady, nine-tenths are cured." Experience confirms that recommendation, and the beneficial results obtained from public insane institutions; whilst persons well able to judge, and having no personal interests to serve, but being actuated by humane motives to benefit their fellow-creatures, speak in similar language; and although the remark may appear trite, it may be said nevertheless, that in few diseases is delay more dangerous, than in the early stages of insanity.

In the present state of feeling respecting lunacy, and the opinions entertained by many, regarding the advantages of mystery and seclusion, in the treatment of the insane; it will not be surprising, if individuals should often feel an unwillingness, to place their relatives in a public hospital, along with other lunatics; hence, the present proposition may not perhaps at first, meet with much favour; however, the suggestion is now thrown out for further consideration, sincerely believing, that its utility will soon be generally acknowledged, if not ultimately adopted.

Having exceeded the limits originally intended, in the observations contained in the preceding pages, respecting insanity, and the admission of medical pupils, to the wards of



public insane asylums, for the purpose of study, I shall refrain, for the present, from any additional remark; trusting that the arguments I have advanced, may produce their due influence, in leading to a dispassionate examination of the question at issue. Should the reasoning employed, however, unfortunately fail, in accomplishing the object contemplated, I shall nevertheless feel satisfied that, at least, I have endeavoured to perform, according to my ability, what appeared to be a duty, incumbent upon me as a governor of these hospitals to undertake; in order to extend towards the unfortunate class of society, who are afflicted with mental alienation, the advantages of having attendants competent to alleviate their complaints; as also, to obtain for the profession, of which I am a member, greater facilities for acquiring knowledge, on this disease, than they at present enjoy; the more so as, in justice to the responsibility physicians incur, they are fully entitled to possess every available opportunity, for the acquisition of professional experience, which public institutions can bestow; more especially in those endowed with real property, or supported at the public expense. The obtaining of such privileges, would prove of great benefit to the public ultimately; and any improvement of the kind would only be just to the medical profession, considering the very onerous duties they have to perform; whilst the best interests of all classes of society are essentially advanced, by their possessing medical practitioners of superior education. But as these qualifications can best be acquired, by attendance in public hospitals for the reception of insane patients; it is hoped, a more free admission into their wards than heretofore, will therefore be permitted, particularly, as very few evils could arise in consequence. Farther, the great usefulness of these benevolent establishments, which contribute so much to the glory of England, would be thus materially promoted; at the same time, the proposed change would indicate the increasing philanthropy of the present age, and its advanced civilization.

FINIS.