

The Meteor.

Lucus a non lucendo.

VOL. I.

ALABAMA INSANE HOSPITAL, TUSKALOOSA, 1872.

NO. 2

Insane Hospitals.

The age being eminently progressive, it is but natural to suppose that improvements will, from time to time, be made in the treatment of insanity. We accordingly read with no little interest and curiosity the Reports of several Superintendents of Hospitals for the insane, in Canada and Nova Scotia; but, in particular, the exhaustive volume of Dr. E. T. Wilkins, Commissioner in Lunacy for the State of California, in his report to Gov. Haught in Dec. 1871. The Legislature having authorized the appointment of a Commissioner, whose business should be to travel over the United States and Europe, and learn all the important facts bearing upon the treatment of the insane, the appointment fell on Dr. Wilkins. Hence his volume or Report.

In the course of his investigations, Dr. Wilkins visited "one hundred and forty-nine Asylums and Hospitals for the insane all in complete working order." Of these, forty-five were in the United States; the remainder in Canada, Great Britain, Ireland and the countries of Europe.

There are three very diverse modes of caring for these unfortunates. In the first or Gheel system, they are distributed among the house-holders of a village, as constituent members of the family. In the second or close system, as it is termed, hundreds are collected in one immense building. In the third, although quite as many as in the last are assembled at one point, they are distributed over a tract of land, in companies of five, eight or ten, as occupants of dispersed cottages.

The Three Systems.

Every one has read and admired the particulars of the colony at Gheel; Dr. Wilkins, while admitting that the patients are better satisfied than in large Hospitals, pronounces the plan impracticable in this country. Few, we think, will question the correctness of this conclusion.

In the second, or close system, there are considerable diversities of detail, well worthy of a most careful consideration as upon them hang the principal controversies as to the best mode of conducting such establishments.

The third, or cottage system, Dr. Wilkins regards, if not impracticable, as in no degree, by its results, compensating for the vast additional expenditure of money, and the immensely increased responsibilities of Officers, nurses, and employees of every kind. The benefits flowing from the so-called home influences surrounding the patient in the cottage system, are, we think, largely supposititious. It must not be forgotten that home influences, in their most perfect form, had been vainly tried upon each individual before resorting to other means and appliances. The advantages of a Hospital are, the restraints it imposes upon the whims and caprices of the insane; the facility of supervision and control which it confers, and, through the multiplicity of wards, of classification founded on social merit; promotion based on this, forming, as in the world, most powerful incentives to self-control, and, by consequence to recovery. The hiring of the insane, as paupers, to the highest bidder, a home influence system, none, in our day, will be disposed to favor. With Dr. Wilkins, therefore, we should have dismissed the Cottage system, if not as summarily, quite as decidedly as the Gheel, but for these facts: it has not yet received a thorough trial; it has found favor with many sensible persons; the Legislature of Maine, possibly of other commonwealths, have taken steps for the establishment, on such plan, of a State hospital.

Since writing the above, we have learned, from Dr. Fisher's book, "Plain talk, about insanity," some facts about the colony at Gheel, of which our previous readings about that famous town had not informed us. Dr. F. says:

"The condition of the patients is such, as would not be tolerated in a well-managed Hospital, either by its officers or the public. Take the free use of letters which prevails, to keep men and women in the fields from running away, or the entire absence of bathing facilities, and fancy the storm of indignation, from the press, which would, in this country, deluge a hospital so situated."

While taking ground that the close system must continue to be the most generally reliable and economical mode of treatment, Dr. Wilkins favors supplements, to all such large establishments, of smaller buildings, for the use of quiet patients; such buildings to be unconnected with the main house, to have open fire places; and windows destitute of guards. Here we differ with the California Doctor, ranging ourselves by the side of Dr. Kirkbride of the famous Pennsylvania Hospital, in regarding all such additions as useless complications of the present system. We are not therefore opposed to progress; by no means. It is mainly for motives of progress that we are disposed to regard with so little favor these new schemes.

Labor, Amusement and Study.

There are three psychical agencies upon which we are disposed to mainly rely for progress in the treatment of the insane. We have the more confidence in them because of their notorious influence upon the sane; and we respectfully submit that insane human nature is, essentially, the same as sane. The agents to which we allude are labor, amusement and study.

We are convinced that the labor of the insane might be made more available, as a means of cure, by allowing, to those who could appreciate it, some compensation for their work.

While amusements are not more esteemed in England than in this country, there is a certain class of diversions, very popular there, which, for some reason, has not been admitted into the curriculum of our Hospitals. We allude to strolls through the streets of a neighboring city, or frequent visits to it, for attendance at lectures, concerts and shows of all kinds; the last being the special delight of the insane.

We would respectfully recommend to the Superintendents of the United States a more frequent resort to this species of entertainment. We know, from experience, that the inmate of a Hospital, intercourse with the great world is eminently enlivening.

In several of the Hospitals abroad, salaried teachers are employed to instruct the patients in reading, writing, drawing and painting. Needle-work is added in the classes for women. The result, as attested by the Superintendents, are, in some individuals a very considerable progress in their studies; in all, an improvement in morals. We, therefore, hope that our Legislators will have the generosity to enable our Superintendent to make study available for the unfortunates of Alabama.

The Hospital Cemetery.

A sequestered, shady knoll, jutting from the brow of a bold hill overlooking the Warrior, forms the last resting-place of our afflicted ones. When the world grew weary of and frowned upon them, the regents of the Hospital met them with smiles. When friends and relatives, despairing of finding a solace or remedy for the wounds of their soul, gave reluctant consent to their banishment from home, the walls of the Hospital, provided by a humane and beneficent people, closed round them with a protective embrace. But the spectres of blighted hopes and disappointed affections still, unrelentingly, pursued them. Friends still more compassionate they needed. Walls still less impervious to influences from the past, they required. These they at length found.

Sad is the sight of a noble mind struggling with the fetters of a diseased organization. Diseased minds—there never were, there never can be such! The will may be, indeed, perverted by sin; the mind may strike only discords, from a deterioration of one or several of the myriad molecules or fibres which enter into the structure of the double handfull of substance we term brain, its sole medium of communication with the external world; but the mind's self diseased! never! Immaterial, spiritual substances know not disease. Disease implies death. The mind can never die. It is immortal!

Rest you have indeed found, poor, afflicted ones! but not here. Here are the decaying tabernacles in which you once lodged; the tattered vestments, fashioned by the Great artificer, which you once wore; but yourselves are far away.

Standing near the little mounds, all of earth you now claim, I hear the roar of a mighty stream converted by opposing rocks into furious rapids, but by the hill, crowned with your monuments, the river flows with deep and placid current. So now placidly glides on, unvexed by the solicitudes that once stirred them, the deep current of your joys. The birds come here to build their nests and rear their young; and of you it may be said, The sparrow hath found her a nest, even thy altars, O Lord! Glancing my eye around, a noble vista, bold hills circling a long reach of the wide river, salutes my gaze; and I think of the celestial prospects that open before you as you tread the margin of the river of life, flowing from the throne of God.

Nellie Falls.

The excess of the bold spring that supplies the Hospital, joined by the full tides of a score of smaller ones, trips along the devious route of a shady ravine, now by gentle inclines, now by plunges down miniature ledges, to seek the Warrior. Before half the distance has been accomplished, in the steepest, narrowest, most densely shaded portion of its guiding dell, its pathway of glistening pebbles is substituted by solid rock which, in a very short time, sinks perpendicularly down to form a genuine precipice of twenty-five or thirty feet. The brave little stream, unpanning, leaps gayly from the fearful brink, and alighting on the dispersed stones at the base, with a merry refrain, to reassemble its dispersed waters, hurries off, with a new animation, to gain its Warrior goal.

We call this cataract Nellie Falls, in honor of the beautiful, accomplished and universally beloved wife of our Superintendent. Constant as is the rhythm of its bounding waters, it is not more so than the tides of melody, vocal and instrumental, in our chapel, which owe existence to her. The little stream sings ever the same song, varied only by the degrees of wealth which the Heavens let fall; and to the songs of Zion, Mrs. Bryce has dedicated all her powers. An accomplished pianist, she forsook the merry pipings of its keys, for the more sweet, more prolonged, more ecstatic strains of that instrument, which, consecrate to the service of the Most High, seems to be inspired with a devotion caught from the seraph choir that fore-gird the throne of the King of Kings.

Newspapers.

Of all reading matter, the Bible alone excepted, the newspaper should take precedence. Without it, the affairs of the world assume the complexion of a maze, a series of events without dependence or connection, and life becomes a grope through a dense fog—the mental vision so limited that the individual is ever incurring the risk of a disastrous surprise, or a loss of the larger share of the legitimate advantages of the smiles of fortune.

There is, besides, in every such paper, of average merit, an amount of information, on a variety of subjects, that would alone go far, in a few years, to constitute any one, "well informed." Our decided opinion is, that any head of a family, not absolute paupers, who does not subscribe for his County paper is either very stupid or very mean; that boys, and girls too, should be required to read through, long articles excepted, one such journal weekly. This duty should be, like that of learning lessons at school, obligatory. The task would soon grow into a pastime, and a reluctance to engage in the dull employment, would be supplanted by a scramble, among the young folks, for the first possession of the weekly delight.

One of the chief benefits of newspapers is the vein of common sense which runs through them—a treasure, of which there is, not unfrequently, a deficiency in more pretentious literature.

After the newspaper, comes the Magazine, with its comprehensive surveys, its bird's-eye views of literature, art, science, politics and religion. The magazine may be regarded as the arranger, the harmonizer, the vitalizer of the *disjecta membra* of the events of the world. Without newspapers, magazines have not whereon to build. Without magazines, the full meaning of the myriad occurrences of life are very imperfectly comprehended.

THE METEOR.

Alabama Insane Hospital.

Edited by a Patient.

Tuskaloosa Ala., Oct. 1st, 1872.

To Readers and Correspondents.

As announced in our first number, the columns of the Meteor will be open only to original communications, from patients of the hospital. While we shall scrupulously preserve the spirit of every communication, we shall exercise our editorial prerogative of making such changes, by pruning or otherwise, as may be necessary to adapt it to the ends contemplated by our journal.

With the exception of an occasional friendly suggestion, and the condemnation of any article they may deem objectionable, the officers of the Hospital have nothing to do with the conduct of the Meteor, and for its views, critical or other, must not be held responsible.

Thanks.

We are under large obligations to a number of Editors for highly complimentary notices of our little sheet. Many thanks, kind friends. Our editorial labors have been to us as habiliments of joy, and we welcome your approval of our efforts as a rich crown to these pure delights.

While convinced that we owe much to the generosity of our critics, indisposed, as they doubtless were, to see faults in a journal issued under such circumstances, we think we have a right to exult somewhat, in the stir our little paper has caused. From far-away Oregon, even, come compliments, evidently sincere, from a distinguished gentleman, and from correspondents of foreign journals, we have received orders for copies to be forwarded to European countries.

With renewed thanks to all kind friends, both at home and abroad, for the generous entertainment accorded our first issue, we address ourselves with increased alacrity to the duties of our position.

Education and Insanity.

In another article we have directed the attention of our readers to study, as a remedial agent in insanity. But an ounce of preventive is worth a pound of cure, and, as a preventive of insanity, education, in our opinion, takes precedence of all other influences.

It is the most efficacious antidote to fanaticism, a most insidious and dangerous form of monomania. It dissipates a horde of torturing spectres which generate in the glooms of ignorance. It elucidates the laws of life and health, and thus prevents those gross trespasses of them which lead straight to madness. It substitutes attention and judgment for oppressive toil, and thus relieves the organization of those grievous strains so often fatal to mental integrity. It enlarges, notoriously, the domain of innocent pleasures, and thus hinders the inroads of vices, as fatal, often, to the health of the mind as to that of the heart and body. It widens the sympathies, and, by exterminating the bigotries of sects and peoples, and making every man a citizen of the world, at home every where, annihilates the cankering cares of alienage, and gives that confidence and tranquility so essential to continued mental soundness. It brings to bear on the soul religious influences which ignorance cannot receive, and thus contributes materially to establish in the heart that peace which the world can neither bestow nor take away—to many individuals an indispensable condition to repose of the soul and, by consequence, to health of the mind.

Amusements for the Insane.

In our article on Insane Hospitals, a regard for the reader's patience caused us to dismiss with the briefest notice several important points. Since that article was penned we have been favored with the perusal of a letter from the justly distinguished Dr. Kirkbride to our Superintendent. Of making provision for the amusement of the insane, Dr. K. writes:—

"It is just as legitimate a source of expense in a hospital, as any thing beyond food and clothing. It is just as necessary as medicine, and is certainly a part of the means of treatment for which an appropriation should be made every year."

To the Legislature.

In our first number, in an article entitled "Thoughts for the times," we undertook to indicate some of the most important ends served by eleemosynary institutions. As your body will soon meet to devise means for promoting the happiness of the people of the State, we venture to bespeak for the afflicted of our establishment a due share of consideration.

The insane have been rightly styled "the most unfortunate class of the whole community." Forced from home, torn from relations, banned by the public voice; upon the wise counsels and generous hearts of the law-makers of their country do they depend for all that makes life desirable, yea, even for life itself. They have been, with the utmost of propriety, termed the "wards of the commonwealth." While, therefore, engaged upon the multitudinous and weighty measures that relate to roads, schools, finance etc. etc., do not forget those who have been, in the providence of God, deprived of every earthly stay but the individuals composing your Assembly.

We would have you reflect that though such a calamity may now seem far removed from each one of you, that you may very soon find it necessary to invoke for some friend or relative, possibly for some tender and sensitive member of your immediate family, a sympathy and protection which, over this broad Earth, can only be found beneath the roof of a Hospital. Nay, even some of yourselves, with nervous systems prostrated by the cares and labors of your responsible positions, may, ere long, seek, in such establishment, protection from the dread advance of an incipient insanity.

Annual Report of our Superintendent.

A few copies of the Superintendent's Report have been printed at the Meteor office—just enough to supply with a copy each member of the Legislature, in the beginning of the session, and in advance of its regular publication by the State printer. The Report, though brief, exhibits very fully the operations of the Hospital for the year ending Oct. 1, 1872.

The results of the year, as regards economy in expenditure, extensive repairs, important improvements, and success generally, in all departments of the institution, will meet, we doubt not, the hearty approval of the people of the State.

The economic results are due to several causes:

1st. The cheapness of provisions as compared with other localities, particularly the North-Eastern and Eastern States: 2nd. The work of so many patients made available in the production of supplies, not only of food, but of mattresses, buckets, shoes, clothing, etc., etc.: 3rd. The small number of employees.

Labor of the Insane.

To show what difficulties surround every detail in the treatment of these unfortunates, we may mention the clash of judgments on the subject which heads this article.

Dr. Wilkins,—see our article on Hospitals for the insane—at a certain hospital in France, found much the larger number of the patients habitually engaged in farm work or mechanical employments, with but little regard to the dangerous nature of the implements entrusted to them. In this large establishment which is a private enterprise, Dr. W. affirms, that labor is altogether over-done, as notably evinced by the statistics of recoveries and deaths, as compared with other hospitals.

On the other hand, the proprietors of a hospital in British America, testify that the labor of the insane is worthless. Of 700 patients, only one was admitted into the shops where edge tools are required, and this exception more for the benefit of the patient than the establishment. They contend that inmates of hospitals can not be trusted with edge tools. Even from the laundry, where, once, many female patients were employed, all are excluded, with the result of a reduction in the number of paid employees.

The experience at the Alabama Insane Hospital is, that much of the labor of the insane is available for the farm, the dairy, the laundry, the sewing room and other places where dangerous implements are not required. Of the 325 patients now in the Hospital, a daily average of about 30 men and as many

women find regular employment as above. Others do occasional jobs in the garden and grounds or about the house. The conclusions on this whole subject which the ablest psychologists have reached are, that while employment can, in many cases, be rendered available as a means of cure, the fact must not be lost sight of that the insane are diseased, and are, to that extent, likely to be injured by injudicious exactions in the department of labor.

Lost Treasures.

Three very interesting communications from the ladies were, by the Superintendent, in real Knickerbocker style, so carefully laid away that they cannot be found. The editor can only give the poor outlines of these entertaining articles.

The first, signed M. E. E., was a jocund narrative of three visits to the Hospital as a patient, the tricks devised by her friends and children to lure her here, her recoveries, returns home, relapses etc. etc. Her account illustrates very forcibly a fact on which medical psychologists insist; viz, the fearful tendency of insanity to recur again and yet again.

The second communication was an anomaly. Though signed "Disconsolate," it was a most cheerful detail of the events of a week in the Hospital. Beginning with the Sunday school of the East Wing, it included an account of rambles through the woods, about the Hospital, in search of wild flowers etc. etc.

The third was a love letter, written in most beautiful and poetic language, beginning

"Sweet Friend, shall I remain a widow?"

Our reply is: Not if the doors of the Hospital open within a reasonable length of time, and the gentleman to whom the letter is addressed be not destitute of true taste, or give a preference to the angelic daughter, over the interesting but somewhat romantic mother.

From the beauties of nature there is no escape. Like the voice of conscience they follow us everywhere, doubtless for the reason that they constitute a force as essential to the exercise of the varied powers of the mind as conscience to those of the heart. No city's smoke or barriers of high-piled brick can effectually bar from the eyes, even of the poorest, the soaring majesty of the King of day, or night's sublime empyrean radiant with blazing worlds. No artifice of man or civilization can wholly shut out the gorgeous prospects which the skies unfold at sun-rise and sun-set. No roll of wheels and light of gas can entirely neutralize the flash of Heaven's artillery, and the hoarse voice of the storm cloud, as with majestic grace unfolding its dread banner, it bids the winds to press with increasing fury their dread charge of desolation and destruction.

Soon after consenting to discharge the duties of Captain for our little Meteor craft, the editor received, from the ladies of the East-wing, a magnificent bouquet. The consequence was, a dream, on the night following, of a kiss from a sweetheart.

Some weeks subsequently, and before peaches were generally ripe, he received, from the same source, a plate of that luscious fruit. On the succeeding morning he learned that his devil, with whom he divided the gift, had dreamed of being married. Having made such progress in the fantastic art, we were very curious to know of what, one or both of us would dream if a half-dozen cantelopes were sent. But the season passing by with nary an editorial cantelope, we ceased to dream, and are now curious to know if a score of oranges or a peck of pears would cause the habit to return.

Our first number contained an advertisement for a wife for a certain official of this establishment. With the replies the Editor has no concern except to affirm that one from Philadelphia is surely "a huge joak." Think, ye impecuniated Alabama beaux, of a lady commending herself to one of your number by her "amiability"! Amiability! what is amiability or any other virtue worth, that is not based on a good PRINCIPAL! Our beaux are magnanimous, but the exigencies of their condition compel them to pay a due regard to INTEREST. The offer is still open; verb. sap. sat.

Our untiring friend and benefactress, Mrs. Ann T. Hunter, of Mobile, is now engaged in an endeavor to obtain for us what the Hospital has long needed, a piano for our Amusement hall. Donations of \$1.00 forwarded to her, at Mobile, Ala., will be gratefully received and duly acknowledged.

THE METEOR.

Alabama Insane Hospital.

A few copies of THE METEOR will be sold to cover cost of material, and enable us to issue another number. Appy at the Hospital.

Our Neighbors.

Proximity to a college is usually regarded a dispensation of divine Providence, to be endured with whatever of equanimity and patience our poor human nature can summon to its aid. But to us the Cadets have proved excellent neighbors. They are never seen prowling around the Hospital, nor have they manifested the slightest disposition to acquire that most contemptible of all notorieties, a reputation for petty annoyances to all in their vicinage. They are, in truth, an assemblage of high-toned young gentlemen, who profiting by the exact discipline brought to bear on their minds and bodies, promise to be ornaments to society and the State. God speed our noble University!

A Rare Chance for Benefactions.

Won't some benevolent friend give us a Piano for our new Amusement Hall? As a matter of business we can commend this opportunity to manufacturers, for they could not hit upon a more successful device for advertising their instruments. As an act of charity no better occasion could be offered.

A Billiard Table is very much needed in the Hospital. Won't the well known generous manufacturers of Phelan's tables give us one?

A Hand-organ, simple as may seem the assertion, would be to the patients a fruitful source of pleasure. What kind hearted man or woman will make us such a donation? Remember that the way to be happy yourselves is to make others happy.

Donations.

We take occasion here to repeat the statement contained in the last Report of our Superintendent, that donations to the Hospital will be gratefully received and duly acknowledged.

We are indebted to a number of persons in different portions of the State for various timely little gifts. To Mr. John S. Pierson, of New York, and Mrs. Ann T. Hunter, of Mobile we are under the most special obligations for their manifestation of a spirit of liberality and benevolence toward our sick ones which knows no halt nor weariness in well-doing. The walls of several of our wards are ornamented with engravings and paintings of rare excellence contributed by the former. To the latter we are indebted for other and varied but not less useful benefactions.

Books, Newspapers, Engravings, Musical Instruments, Games of all kinds, etc., etc., are always acceptable, and contributors may feel assured, however insignificant such donations may seem, that they fulfill one of the noblest ends of mortal actions, the promotion of human happiness.

The publishers of Books, Periodicals and Newspapers, who may receive a copy of the Meteor will confer, by contributions to our Library and Reading-Room, a great favour on a large number of afflicted persons cut off from the enjoyments of the outside world.

We were pleased to meet in our sanctum, the other day, Dr. Searey and Judge Miller, resident Trustees, on a tour of inspection through the Hospital. From the latter we received a token of Odd Fellowship good will; from the former, a compliment to some May verses we had the honor of composing. Small favors thankfully received, great ones—well, let's see—

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick."

In behalf of the Superintendent and all in the Hospital we return thanks for the serenade given the establishment some nights since by the University Independent Band. The interval between tea and bed time was covered by it from common place into one of those golden periods set with simplest and purest pleasure.

Innocent Row.

Some days ago, the Editor stepped down to the printing office and was busily engaged in putting type into a stick—not a walking club, but a printer's baton, that literary staff so essential to the locomotion of the age—when he was thus accosted by a patient from the Shoe-Shop adjoining, "We want a name for this new row of rooms, and you must devise one." We on the instant suggested a derivative of his own name, Collin's Row. "No," he said, "that won't do. It must be something with fool in it."

Crazy Row, Insane Court, Demented Block, Epileptic Hall, Fatuous place, Imaginary-ill Building and some others came into our mind, but only to be promptly rejected. At length we recollected that the term innocent, used in some countries to denominate idiots, was in all employed to characterize children. Innocent Row then would fulfill the condition stipulated for by the shoe-maker, from Pike Co., and, while carrying on its face nothing offensive, would be in fact a most appropriate designation; for between insane persons and children there are many points of resemblance. Both are not unfrequently whimsical, passionate, having little self-control, and while but little amenable to pure reason, wonderfully susceptible to the influences of kindness and a mild, firm discipline.

"Innocent Row" then is the title which, with the consent of the Superintendent, we have applied to the long range of rooms recently built in connection with the men's airing Court, opening by one door into this and by another into the capacious back yard of the Centre-building.

Employment, useful, profitable employment, takes now very high rank among the therapeutical agents for diseased states of the brain. We may therefore regard Innocent Row as a fountain of Health lately opened up in the Alabama Insane Hospital. It is true there will sometimes be a difficulty in inducing the inmates to partake, for while it is easy to lead a horse to water, his own volition must determine the act of drinking.

We intended to give in this number of our paper a list of those Newspapers which by the generosity of their publishers are sent us gratuitously, but the press of matter has crowded it out. Too many thanks cannot be given for such donations. There is nothing—the writer speaks from experience—which contributes more to the enjoyment of life in a Hospital than good reading matter, and there is about a weekly newspaper coming from the neighborhood of our distant home—strewn, as it ever is, with familiar names, and suggestive of a thousand pleasant recollections—a charm which nothing else can diffuse. With what eagerness the inmates expect and seize upon such papers, any one may learn by conversing with the Supervisor, whose business it is to distribute them. We send to each of the liberal publishers alluded to above, a copy of The Meteor. We also send this first number of our little paper to the office of other journals published in the State, hoping that they will suffer us to add their paper to the roll of those voluntarily contributed to the Hospital. The number of inmates now considerably exceeding 300, it is evident that a much larger supply of Newspaper reading would be most acceptable.

Front Yard.

Dr. Bryce, with many other improvements, has commenced, aided by a competent landscape Gardener, the decoration of the lawn immediately in front of the Hospital. When the walks shall be fringed with bright and fragrant blossoms, the squares studded with a varied assortment of ornamental shrubs and rare plants, and the numerous trees encircling the whole shall have pushed to somewhat bolder proportions the verdant capitals of their wild-wood columns, the front yard of the Alabama Insane Hospital will present, to the eyes of its inmates and visitors, a rare picture of the espousals of artistic design and natural beauty.

Vegetables.

The promise of fruit and vegetables was never better. It may surprise small operators to learn that forty barrels of Irish potatoes, covering nearly twenty acres of land, were planted this season for the use of the Hospital. We need hardly add that our garden is a full blooded Irishman.

May Day Festival.

Having been so fortunate as to include among our visitors on May Day that most courteous and whole-souled gentleman, Col. Joseph W. Taylor, Editor of the Tuscaloosa Times, our little celebration received at his hands, through the medium of his valuable journal, its full meed of publicity and honor.

We only allude to it here to express the profound pleasure with which we listened to the few remarks he did us the honor to make on the occasion.

We learn from Dr. Bryce that a gentleman, a citizen of the State, whose name we will give at another time, purposes to enrich the recreation department of the Hospital by a donation of \$1500 to be expended on our Amusement Hall.

It would be difficult to imagine a more timely or more judicious benefaction. One of the great points in the case of diseased brain—insanity is so regarded by the most distinguished scientists—is, as in the case of other diseased organs, to secure rest or abstinence from work. An arm or a leg may be confined with splints, the bowels may be locked up with opiates, but what power can restrain the action of a diseased cerebrum. Only while sleep diffuses its mellifluous influences can it be said to gain absolute rest.

Diversions and amusements, of whatever kind that agreeably entertain the mind, offer the nearest approach to a state of perfect quietude, and in fact possess advantages over it, for it is important that the insane brain while being rescued from its inflamed or irritated condition, shall not cease to be exercised in the performance of its legitimate functions. Amusements therefore may be regarded as calculated to fulfill indications which are unattainable by any and all other means however skillfully combined or wisely used—emancipating the faculties of the mind from the tyranny of their own morbid conceits and at the same time preventing the loss, by prolonged disuse, of the ability to conduct the complex process of legitimate ratiocination.

All honor then to the noble man whose good wishes for our afflicted ones takes so practical, and therefore so Christian a form.

The Laundry.

Within a dozen paces of our gushing spring is the Laundry. The building so termed includes not only the steam Laundry with its Drying-room, but the Boilers, Engines, Turning-lathe, Grist and Planing-mill and rooms for the Laundry-man and family.

The building then is necessarily capacious, and we have sometimes thought if a back-woods-man who had never travelled should approach the Hospital from the North, he might incur the risk of mistaking the Laundry for the parent establishment. But the slightest glimpse of the mother house would undeceive him, and of this latter he would probably be ready to exclaim with the near-sighted man who fishing for eels drew up a grapevine, "Jeminy! ain't that a buster!"

Carroll's Troop.

A gratuitous exhibition was given some days ago by the above to the inmates of the Alabama Insane Hospital, not less than 150 Patients being present on the occasion. We can commend the members of this Troop as humane gentlemen and excellent delineators of character. The entertainment was altogether the most successful and amusing ever given at the Hospital.

Mr. Carroll is also the manufacturer and vendor of a new soap which has been tried at the Hospital and found to be all that is claimed for it.

Wanted,

FOR a couple of GENTLEMEN MORE QUIET and PRIVATE APARTMENTS, with BOARD, LODGING and MEDICAL ATTENDANCE free.

ONE of these gentlemen has a NEIGHBOR that gets VERY PIOUS with the advent of NIGHT, and keeps him AWAKE by a long succession of BADLY INTONED HYMNS.

THE NEIGHBOR of another, judging from his CONDUCT and occasional EXCLAMATIONS, has a NIGHT-long ENCOUNTER with the DEVIL or evil SPIRITS generally, to the no small DISCOMFORT of ALL in his VICINITY. Address Ala. Insane Hospital. July 4-3m

Our Amusement Hall.

Once upon a time the patients at the bidding of the officers of the Institution were assembled weekly for dancing or theatricals. Of late, for some reason, the habit has been broken into. Of the dancing we shall have something to say in a future number. The theatrical exhibitions we propose to discuss very briefly at the present time.

And first of the room, the second story of an out-house about fifty feet to the rear of the Centre building. Its form is that of a quadrangle with one-fourth of its long sides retreating at the centre to enclose an alcove or nook 12 or 15 feet square. The stage and withdrawing rooms of ample size occupy the whole extent of one end of the room. Very handsome scenery, painted by Mr. Furman, an employee of the Hospital, without expense to the State, diffuse over the former that air of romance and poetic beauty so essential to the effectiveness of the drama; an effect heightened in no small degree when, as at Christmas, the remainder of the room is adorned with festoons, garlands and stars of cedar, ivy, holly and other evergreens.

The seats for the male portion of the audience—bless the ladies! they always get angels' luck, the best of everything—are not as comfortable as they might be, consisting of benches of various structure brought from different parts of the Hospital. Nor is the discomfort of hard seats the only one to which the audience is subjected. The stage being on a level with the floor of the room, it is necessarily difficult to obtain a good view unless one were a clairvoyant and so had power to peer through a half dozen thick skulls decked with their usual hirsute clothing. If this feat has ever been performed we know not. Most of the audience, we imagine, are too much occupied with an obdurate cranium nearer home to undertake the task. The assumption of an erect posture is a much simpler feat and one which promises a surer means of escape from the annoyances of an imperfect view and a hard bench. But a movement of this kind is construed by those immediately in front to confer on them a similar privilege; so the last state of that audience is worse than the first.

But whether perfectly or imperfectly seen, the actors continue to ply their rolls, yet with a considerable interval between the parts; so considerable as at times to be quite fatiguing and to beget the suspicion that some one is behind the scenes composing matter for the next act, and which also has to be memorized before the curtain is again lifted. Perhaps we exaggerate somewhat, but the intervals have been altogether too long on several of the evenings.

Of the merits of these performances, comical for the most part, it is difficult to write. If we admit the common run of negroes to be reliable connoisseurs, we should unhesitatingly pronounce as our verdict, "sublime! excellent!! pretty good!!!"—as a Frenchman would exclaim it; for with laughter loud and prolonged does the colored portion of the audience salute most of the attempts at the comical. If however we were to consult our own impressions we should say that excellence was not always attained—that there was some room, however small, for improvement. The dresses, constructed with care, are eminently suggestive of a wealth of fun and frolic within. The dancing, much of it at least, is enjoyable. The wit too has not unfrequently the sparkle of the true article. The chief fault lies in overdoing—"cutting it too fat." To use a western phrase—thereby overpassing the bounds of true humour and entering the region of the absurd.

It must be remembered, however, that the performers are conscious of the fact that a large portion of the audience have had little opportunity for attaining to any considerable degree of perspicacity on histrionic subjects, and it is possible that points, incidents and acts which impress the writer as absurd exaggeration may seem to others the acme of laughable drollery.

Of the peculiarities of particular actors we purpose to say something in future. At present we have only space to add that the whole troop deserve high praise for their persistent efforts to administer to the amusement of the afflicted inmates. So far from receiving any compensation, we learn that all the members of the company have spent quite a considerable sum of money, for poor men, in the execution of their noble and generous undertaking.

In conclusion, we are reminded by Dr. Bryce, that the causes of the temporary discontinuance of the weekly entertainments are the hot weather and the push to a speedy completion important and multi-farious improvements in connection with the Hospital. While these are progressing the Amusement-room will be taken in hand—the ceiling elevated, the

stage lifted, permanent and comfortable seats arranged for the spectators, the whole room remodelled and repainted, and all the appurtenances brought fully up to the standard of an advanced modern style.

We learn that our accomplished builder, Mr. C. M. Donoho, of whose skill the Laundry and Barn are striking attestations, has expressed a determination to spare no pains towards finishing this particular job in a masterly manner. G.

Insanity and Love.

Perhaps our modest sheet may meet the eye of a score or two of those bewitching creatures who are supposed to maintain the connection between their ethereal essence and their fleshly organization by a water-cracker three times a day, aided perhaps by a few sips of nectar which the humming birds have taught them to brew. These will doubtless be solicitous to learn something of the relation of love to insanity.

The writer, to whom has been assigned the task of originating an article on the subject, must affirm from all that he can learn that the connection between the two is far from intimate; so trifling in fact as to be almost unworthy of regard. Dyspepsia is a much more fruitful contributor to the wards for females than disappointed affections. Disordered stomachs are consequently looked for with more solicitude by physicians than broken hearts.

This is what the Doctors say. The writer begs leave to dissent. He has on more than one occasion felt a peculiar pain in the front part of his thorax which he is convinced is not explicable on the hypothesis of undigested bacon or beef. It is very possible that inexperienced young folks might mistake heart-burn for heart-ache, but an old stager, as sensitive to female loveliness as he, can always diagnosticate the two maladies.

But he must in candor confess that if the ladies are terrible heart breakers, they are infallible heart menders. As doubtless, *mutatis mutandis*, the same may be predicated of the other sex, we can readily understand how, while disappointed affections abound, there should be so few cases of insanity referable to such cause. Thus Esculapius and Venus are made to kiss each other, and a broken heart lies down with perfect health, and ere long a little child shall lead them. J.

What is Insanity?

The following is one of the most recent definitions of insanity: "A manifestation of disease of the brain characterised by a general or partial derangement of one or more faculties of the mind, and in which, while consciousness is not abolished, mental freedom is weakened, perverted or destroyed."

With all deference to the authorities on such subjects we confess that the definition reminded us very forcibly of a traveller's description of a strange animal he had met in the wilds of California: "It's just like all other four-legged animals except that it differs from them in certain particulars of size, proportion, color, habits, etc."

That insanity is a disease of the brain is a well established fact. It would not do however to define it thus, for there are many diseases of the brain whose phenomena are not those of insanity.

Although the weight of authority regards its manifestations as indicative of organic change, there are those who believe it to be, in some instances at least, only a functional disorder. Most pathologists admit that there may be in the case of other organs a loss of function without organic disease; as, for instance, from a lack of the usual supply of blood. Now the substance circulating along the nerves may be regarded, or at least conceived of, as a very subtle fluid. It is therefore probable that the brain may be under certain circumstances robbed of a normal reserve of this nerve fluid or force by means of an irritation transmitted from a distant or contiguous portion of the bodily frame, or be, by such irritation, so rapidly deprived of that which it momentarily secretes as to leave no sufficient interval for the exercise of the power of thought.

That such functional disorder might continue for any considerable period without organic deterioration is highly improbable.

Having objected to a current definition of insanity, a substitute might be expected of us. We are unwilling to attempt such a feat, but will give the reply of one of our patients, to whom this query was propounded, What is Insanity? "Why something that gits the matter with a fellow that makes him go crazy." MEDICUS.

Nurse's Refrain.

As sung in *Our Amusement Hall*, to the air of "Rosin the Bow!"

I have been through my whole life ambitious,
Trying hard some grand station to gain,
But went up the spout when I came to
The Hospital for the Insane.

As times were quite hard in the city,
I came here a place to obtain,
And to live like a lord in a palace
At the Hospital for the Insane.

When I set in they read me a paper
As long as a rich farmer's lane,
Of rules all employees must follow,
At the Hospital for the Insane.

They fined me the first morn for sleeping,
Although I tried hard to explain
I didn't know daylight came early
At the Hospital for the Insane.

On the same day for cursing a patient
I was fined by them heavy again,
And threatened with instant expulsion
From the Hospital for the Insane.

That night, being lonely and restless,
I sought a companion to gain,
But was fined for forsaking my own ward
In the Hospital for the Insane.

For lighting my lamp on the next night
They popped a fine on me again,
And another for swearing about it
In the Hospital for the Insane.

They fined me if when 'twas my night out,
Through forgetfulness I would retain
My key in my pocket while absent
From the Hospital for the Insane.

They fined me if when 'twas my night in,
I'd forget all night to remain;
They said slipping out was against rules
Of the Hospital for the Insane.

If when meeting a female attendant,
To chat I would briefly remain,
They'd charge me "two bits" for the confab
In the Hospital for the Insane.

This scared me, for if just for talking
They fined me "two bits," it was plain
For hugging or kissing they'd hang me
In the Hospital for the Insane.

They fined me for this, that and tother,
Then for something else fined me again;
'Tis the best school there is for re-fine-ment,
That Hospital for the Insane.

In the future I'll repress my ambition,
And content in a cabin remain;
I've found out the folly of grandeur
In that Hospital for the Insane. K.

There are now in the HOSPITAL 325 patients. The full capacity of the House is 350. Beyond this number we could not go.

WANTED A WIFE

For a certain Official of the
Alabama Insane Hospital.

The gentleman is neither a youth nor an old man, but combines, in a rare degree, the bloom of

Early Manhood

with the sedate carriage and unflinching propriety of conduct that belong to middle age. The Lady, if the general opinion be correct that in matrimonial affairs opposite qualities attract, must not be

LITTLE

and yet must be small, must not have light hair or gray eyes, nor must she be a believer in infant baptism or predestination.

Amicus.

Our jolly friend, Col. I. I. JONES, of Mobile, gets off the following:—

The lads were made for the lasses.
The lasses were made for the lads—
Those who doubt it are asses,
And never will be dads!