

The Meteor.

Lucus a non Lucendo.

VOL. 4.

ALABAMA INSANE HOSPITAL, TUKALOOSA, APRIL, 1876.

NO. 16.

Reformatory for Inebriates.

At the last annual meeting of the Superintendents of American Hospitals for the Insane a series of resolutions was offered by Dr. Nichols and adopted, recommending the erection by the States of Reformatories for Inebriates. They would have this class of unfortunates committed to the Reformatory by due process of law, and kept there for a certain definite period, say for one or more years.

We are glad to see the Association of Superintendents take this matter in hand. Doctor Bryce, as far back as 1870, in his annual Report to the Legislature, advised this course and even entered into the details of the organization of such an institution.

At any rate, Inebriate Asylums, as they are at present conducted, are huge humbugs, and we are glad to see are falling into disfavor and being generally abolished for want of patronage. We are also delighted to record the fact that our Superintendent, contemporaneously with Mr. Dalrymple of England, took the lead in this matter six years ago, and earnestly urged upon the Legislature of our own and other States the establishment of institutions for the economical and scientific treatment of that insidious cerebral disease which some able physicians have even characterized a species of insanity.

Responsibility of the Insane.

The plea of insanity has been so often used to shield criminals from the penalties of law that it is not wonderful there should be frequent manifestations of disgust at such procedure. The editors of reputable and even influential journals have of late gone so far as to advocate the practical bar of such plea, by enactments imposing long or perpetual confinements in a hospital, whenever the malefactor, by means of this plea, shall escape the gallows or the penitentiary. But the *Albany Law Journal*, in a short article of recent date, very lucidly demonstrates the absurdity and cruelty of such enactments.

The idea of holding any one who is *non compos mentis* to a strict accountability is in the highest degree absurd. Nor is the absurdity, in the least, qualified by the fact that persons of sound minds avail themselves of the immunity of the insane to perpetrate crimes. As well abolish marriage because many women make it a cloak to licentiousness, or the ministry because it is so often perverted to selfish and base ends.

But it by no means follows that a person is of sound mind because the newspapers proclaim that the insanity is feigned—is a

fore or afterthought. Modern psychological investigations point strongly to the conclusion that many of the noted criminals of which history makes mention were insane persons. In truth every advance in physiology and psychology instead of restricting tends to widen the area of immunity. The emotions and the judgment take character so easily from the condition of the body that there is a disposition on the part of some psychologists to regard every wrong impulse as a mere expression of some bodily disorder. Though this is an error, there are so many facts in every one's experience and observation pointing that way, it is not strange that the more one knows of the wonderful sympathies of mind and body the more averse he should become to characterizing every ebullition of wrong passion as an obedience to the promptings of the devil.

The fault in some, possibly in many of these, and other cases, lies in our jury system. This seems almost as if purposely designed to protect criminals and make justice doubtful and expensive. And here it will not be out of place to offer some strictures upon a maxim which is probably the chief ground of support for its present form.

"It is better that ninety-nine criminals escape than that one innocent person be punished." We submit, that while as an abstract proposition, this sounds very sublime and poetically beautiful, as a rule of conduct for individuals or communities it is simply absurd. The principle of guidance for all mortal judgments is embodied in the apothegm, *Probabilities are the rule of life*. "I believe" is all that in the great majority of cases the wisest and the best ever find to justify any course of conduct. "I know" is more often found in the mouths of the ignorant and the narrow-minded. The maxim, alluded to above, makes knowledge obligatory, and bars the gates to courses of conduct based on probabilities. Who is the author of the saying that would interpose such a broad shield to crime, we know not. But we know of another very different saying which has the seal of omniscience, and which is in every way wondrously consonant with the experience of human life: "It is better that one man die than that the whole nation perish."

Spiritualism.

The Superintendent, now and then, when patients are persistent in solicitations to be sent home, jocosely asks the opinion of other patients as to their mental condition, and we have been highly amused at the verdicts rendered. It by no means follows, that an inmate is blind to his neighbors' perversities because he can not see his own.

Not long since the Doctor called a jury of the ward to decide if A was a thoroughly sane person. All but B agreed that he was. B declared that he saw in A only one evidence of insanity, a belief in spiritualism, table-turning etc. In the arguments following, A contended that such a belief did not imply insanity, for the reason that so many men and women in the outer world entertained similar beliefs. But B met this argument by the averment that all the lunatics are not confined—that there are troops of persons going at large, who if not reckoned insane ought to be. The discussion caused considerable amusement, though it

at length appeared that A was not a believer in spiritualism, and had devised a *seance* only to annoy B. This incident shows that the standard of mental health is higher in a hospital than in the world. When a person enters the wards of a hospital for the insane his mind is put on trial and fully proved before he is sent away. In the world multitudes are reckoned sane because circumstances have never occurred to subject their mental condition to an *experimentum crucis*. We would therefore advise a great many persons, spiritualists in particular, to give a wide birth to hospitals for the insane.

A Notable Event.

Circumstances which would seem trifling to others are matters of moment to the inmate of a hospital. The insane are sick persons who for purposes of recuperation have retired from the bustle of business and society. Their happiness therefore depends much on a variety of little events closely related to those of ordinary invalids—how the nurses deport themselves; whether the fare is well or ill-cooked; how the doctor looked, and what he said; the contents of a letter received; whether the weather is heavy or elastic, etc. etc. Occasionally an event of such extraordinary importance occurs, as stirs their souls to tempestuous oscillations: An old nurse is discharged or a new one is employed; a mouse or rat is found in their bed-room and killed; a friend is sent home or an old acquaintance comes to the hospital as a patient; an inmate has broken the handle of a brand new broom, while trying to break a nurse's head; or some one has given them a whole "square" of tobacco.

None of these things happened to us on a day which will be memorable in our hospital experience. Something of vastly greater importance took place. It was as novel as it was unexpected, and as delightful as it was strange. The occupants of the East Wing came over in a huge body to roll tents. We cannot give much space to a description of the rolling. We were so impressed with the appearance of a crowd of pretty women in the men's Airing-court that we had hardly the self-possession to note details. Ladies we frequently have there, but an army of feminines never having before come upon us, we were pondering the phenomenon and endeavoring to understand the meaning of—what shall we term it?—the invasion of the East Wing by the West.

After studying the throng from a distance we ventured nearer, and gaining courage in proportion to the attractive power, which we found by a cordometer to be as the cube of the distance, we were very soon forced into the mass of beauty crowding the upper fourth part of the alley. We heeded their playing as closely as our mental condition allowed, for a contributor to the last *METEOR* had declared that the gaming of most ladies is pretty highly spiced with humbug. Our observations convinced us, on the contrary, that their rolling is remarkable in several respects: In the first place for the

precision with which the balls were aimed. Not once did they miss more than a few feet, and several times the pins were actually struck and two or three of them toppled over. Then, too, their rolling was remarkable for the force with which the balls were thrown. With such violence were the huge spheres loosed from their delicate grasp—all rolled about equally strong—that a young woman from Union Springs, when dissatisfied with the course of her ball, had considerable difficulty in overtaking it before it got to the end of the alley. But she was nimble of foot and was encouraged by the hope of having another trial. All this occurred on the 29th of January, and we put it on record as one of the notable events of the Centennial year.

Insane Responsibility.

On our first page will be found an article on the responsibility of the insane, in which are some good thoughts. But believing that an exhibit of the views of our Superintendent on the point would be specially interesting, we determined to supplement that article by another, setting forth his views as he has, from time to time, expressed them in our presence. The subject is difficult; for while it is indisputably barbarous to hold persons of diseased minds to a strict accountability, society has a right to demand protection from dangerous characters, whether they be made so by the devil or disease.

Our Superintendent, while agreeing with the leaders of the medical profession, that many notorious criminals were possessors of disordered minds, finds much reason in the impatience of the lawyers and the public with the facile and speedy loosing upon society of characters known to be willing, on a slight provocation, to imbue their hands in blood. On the one hand we are confronted by appeals for mercy in behalf of those whose violent acts are but the throes of ordinary anger breaking through the attenuate barriers of an over delicate nervous organization or badly organized mental power. On the other hand we are assailed by the appeals of countless families, for protection against foes who to the ferocity and waiting and watching of beasts add the human power of making occasions and justifications for their fiendish designs. The fact is unquestionable that there are persons with seemingly sound though limited mental powers, who readily magnify a slight offence to their self-love into the grossest insult, and pervert into direct charges of crime the faintest allusions to their accidental and remote connection with the perpetrators of a disgraceful action. Their poor mind finds in the tones of the voice, the expression of the eyes or the manner of the speaker something that means a great deal more than the words spoken; and deeming their honor assailed, are ready to deal quick and dire retribution.

But the lawyers, and the greater part of the public, unfamiliar, by daily experience, with the extent to which mental actions are intensified and perverted by disordered nerves, see in such revengeful acts only the outcropping of demontic malice. They therefore cry out for summary punishment of the perpetrators.

As we before said, our Superintendent thinks there is reason in the conclusions of both parties, and he therefore advocates what may be termed a modified responsibility. He holds, that death should in no case be inflicted upon any one who there is good

reason for believing is insane or imbecile. But that a statute should provide, in all cases in which the gallows or the penitentiary is escaped by the plea of insanity, that a special commission—say of six persons appointed by the Judge, three of whom shall be respectable physicians—shall determine the moral turpitude of the crime, with relation to the amount of actual cerebral disease or deficiency, and the kind and amount of punishment to be inflicted; if he shall be confined in an Insane hospital for life, or for one or more years, or until the Superintendent shall declare that, in his opinion, he is cured of his insanity or has ceased to be a dangerous person; or if, for more effectual safe-keeping, he shall be lodged, for a longer or shorter time, in a penitentiary or jail. The penitentiary might be a more proper place than an Asylum in some cases, for the reason that Insane hospitals are not, and ought not to be, so constructed as to defy the ingenuity of any one bent on gaining his liberty; and some insane criminals are as ingenious in picking locks and breaking through walls as in finding occasions for the venting of their malice.

This idea of a modified responsibility is, we sincerely believe, eminently reasonable, and would secure to all the parties concerned as close an approach to absolute justice as our human methods allow. It would shield the possessors of weak or diseased minds from the full penalties of law, and thus save a community from the imputation of resort to barbarous methods in dealing with such unfortunates. At the same time it would give society that protection from a class of dangerous persons, which it assuredly has the right to demand.

But it may be asked, if the persons be insane or imbecile why punish at all? Because the rights of others require it, and because the insane are rightly esteemed responsible in a degree. The discipline of all hospitals is based upon the theory of a modified responsibility. The insane man will do many things in the absence of a nurse that he will not do in his presence. His deportment to those in authority is essentially different from his bearing to his fellows. He may imagine that he is a prophet, and that all who do not treat him as such deserve to be well kicked. But he will be very chary not to revenge on the more muscular inmates any supposed affronts to his divine character. It would benefit all insane persons, even the inmates of hospitals, to know that they are amenable to the laws of the land. Many a time we have heard inmates say: "If I cut, burn or kill, nothing can be done to me. They say I am insane. That gives me a loop-hole for escape, let me do what I may." We submit, that they who can reason thus ought not to be allowed to do so. They should be made to know that the law of the land is for them, as for others, so far as they are competent.

The above are a few of the thoughts which just now occur to us as bearing upon the most salient points of this interesting matter. The subject is one of great importance and great magnitude, but we think that the solution above proposed must form the basis of a satisfactory adjustment, and that, until its principles are embodied in statutes, there will be no abatement of the fierce contests betwixt the doctors, the lawyers and the public.

Meteor Office Entertainment.

In the afternoon of the 21st of January, the editor of the METEOR, who was known to be a great admirer of Mrs. Dr. Huger, as a young lady, gave an en-

tertainment to the bride and groom in his office. There were present Dr. and Mrs. Huger, Dr. and Mrs. Bryce, Col. Clarkson, Miss Huger, and Dr. Cochran. The entertainment consisted of an ample provision of cake, candies and nuts, with wine. Numerous healths were drunk, and all the participants expressed their satisfaction with the editor's first effort in the role of the host on the boards of his sanctum.

[The facts of the above are as follows: Mrs. Huger had promised to pay us a visit in the METEOR office. Wishing to be hospitable, and knowing that small talk was not our forte, we sent to Tuscaloosa for nuts and candies, in order that we might have something more substantial than gab to offer her. Mrs. Bryce hearing of our city order and its purport, added, free of charge to us, cakes, nuts, candies, home-brewed wine; and thus quite a sumptuous little entertainment was extemporized to the great delight of all the participants. And as only a small portion of the good things were consumed by the invited guests, the large remainder was disbursed among the crowd in the adjoining Airing-court. So the METEOR entertainment to Dr. and Mrs. H., resulted in an entertainment to a throng of the denizens of the Hospital. Ed of M.]

THE METEOR.

Alabama Insane Hospital.

Edited by a Patient.

Tuscaloosa, Ala., April, 1876.

THE METEOR is published quarterly, and is printed at the Hospital exclusively by the Patients. Original communications only are admitted in its columns.

Hospital Literary Societies.

For some time they have had on the East Wing a Reading Club. Once a week the members convene to read aloud and to discuss various topics connected with or suggested by the articles read. The Supervisor of the West Wing, conceiving that the gentlemen of the establishment would find pleasure in the conduct of a Debating Club, induced several of them to join with him in forming one. A Constitution and By-Laws were adopted and some meetings held. At one of these a number of ladies, patients and nurses, were elected members, and have attended with commendable regularity, and contributed no little to the interest of the debates and the general business. The Superintendent, his wife and the Matron have been elected honorary members. The ladies have the option of speaking or reading their addresses in debate. Besides the debates the Club has other entertainments—reading, declamation and criticism of the debates and the proceedings of each meeting. Fines for non-performance of duty are not, of course, imposed; and the Club are now discussing the modes and means of punishing for dereliction of duty. One member

urged the adoption of a rule that any one failing, without good reason, to perform any of the ordinary requirements of the Club, be required to walk to the grave-yard alone at night. This proposal was not adopted, for besides the loss of all the lady members, it might have resulted in an effort on the part of the proposer to walk to a graveyard in a distant county.

So far the Reading and Debating clubs have accomplished well the purpose of their establishment, and with lapse of time will grow still more useful and entertaining. It is in contemplation to have occasional public debates, at which the whole Hospital world will be present.

Our experience with these modest literary ventures justifies us, we think, in recommending similar essays to the officers of other institutions for the insane.

Our Paper.

This number completes the fourth year of the METEOR. During the whole time it has never failed to make its regular quarterly appearance promptly. This, in connection with the fact that its contributions and conduct have been exclusively the work of the patients in the Hospital, is, to say the least, a little remarkable. Of the literary excellence of the paper others of course must be the judges; if we were so disposed however, we could fill this number with the commendations which have been showered upon it by the Press.

It would be well perhaps to state in this connection, that while we issue several hundred copies of the METEOR to the Press and patrons of the Hospital, it can not be had for money. We have hauled down our subscription rates. We can afford to do so, and will in the future receive no subscriptions for the paper.

The object of the enterprize, as we have often said before, is to keep the Press and people of Alabama, especially the patrons of the Hospital, *en rapport* with the doings of the institution, and well abreast with the most advanced views in the care and treatment of the insane. We have overwhelming testimony to our success in this particular, and so enter upon another year of newspaper existence with renewed energy and hope.

Strolls about the Hospital.

We have written many times on this subject. We have pictured the most prominent and pleasing features of the country around the Hospital. We have recounted the moods in which a patient views our State University, and notes the striking resemblance between the cadets and kildees. We have dealt to the Tuscaloosians some lectures on their supineness in suffering the wondrous power of the Warrior to expend itself in dirges over the lost cause or in lullabies to waking dreams of great things in the future. We have told of the mighty Briareus imprisoned beneath every rood of the ground over which we strolled, and waiting with impatience to be loosed from the light bands of the overlying strata to do all the work that industry or avarice can suggest. We have pictured the condition of Alabama when that grand but much abused enterprize, the Ala. and Chat. R. Road, shall become the great aorta betwixt Baltimore and New Orleans. We have moralized upon the tumble-down cabins crowning the noble elevation of Castle-hill, and seen with our mind's eye the same stately hill

decked with palatial villas. We have recounted with infinite zest our renewal of the pastimes of boyhood—our raids upon the peach and plum orchards, the chestnut and hickory groves. We thought we had found in the strolls we had taken, all the pleasure the material afforded. We forgot, that however excellent be a picture, the hand of a master can, by a few light touches, make it a new and wondrous thing—infuse it with a beauty, a wealth, a power, of which there were at first only dreams and hints. Who is there that has not felt, even when confessedly happy, the lack of something to crown that happiness? Who has not known a bliss approaching perfection that yet left us pining for some impulse, some feeling, to round it out, to halo, to angelicize it. Such has often been our condition. Nature is, oh! how beautiful! Yet she is unsatisfying. For why? Because the deepest principle of our souls is not an aspiration for the beautiful, the high, the noble. Vain is all beauty, all grandeur, all sublimity, if the profound depths of the heart be not stirred by the power of love. Love alone can sway without exception every power of that universe which each carries within himself. And if love alone is the lord of this inner world in which all that is beautiful and noble must find its completeness, who is the guardian, the keeper, the swayer of this wonderful potency, love? Where is its habitation? where its natal home? Where out in the angel form and the celestial presence of woman.

The above rhapsody is due to a stroll in which we participated, with some of the officers of the Hospital and a young lady from the city. It is not then surprising that the bewitching features of the country about the Hospital gained a thousand fold of interest by the fact that a queen of love and beauty walked beside us. Can it be, we thought, that our guardian angel, whom we have so often wished we might be favored to behold, has assumed palpable form for our especial delight, and that it is she who now walks beside us and throws over the old familiar scenes the airs of that paradise from which she has just come? It must be so, and we find ourselves imploring her never to leave us, but to be our sweet conductress to the beautiful home of our great Father on high.

We await her reply. Should it be favorable, farewell, Mr. Editor, a long farewell, to you and to the readers of the METEOR!

Meteoric Dust.

The METEOR is indebted to Miss D. L. Dix for a complimentary letter.

The Superintendent will soon cause to be put up at our spring a Duplex Worthington pump, which will fill the Hospital tanks in less than an hour. Mr. Henry R. Worthington, with his characteristic liberality, makes a handsome deduction from regular prices.

Dr. H. A. Buttolph, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Lunatic Asylum, and who stands among the foremost, if not himself the very first of American Superintendents, has been placed in charge of the new State Hospital at Morristown, said to be the grandest institution of the kind in the world.

Our select entertainments for this quarter have been very pleasant, in consequence of all engaging with spirit in the little frivolities. We thought years ago that we had bid farewell to "Grind the bottle," "Thimble," "Chase the squirrel" etc., but we found ourselves as much interested in the nonsense as before the girls toughened our heart by wanting us to court two or three of them at the same time.

The grateful ex-patient, alluded to in our

last, has been as good as her word, and has sent us a young cargo of nice things. We will not undertake to enumerate them. There were some of everything that men or women wear, from stockings to dress-combs. Special and valuable presents were sent to the officers of the Hospital. Every patient will get a handsome and useful gift.

We record with sorrow the death of Dr. J. W. Wilkie, the Sup't of the New York Asylum for insane convicts at Auburn. He died on the 13th ulto., in the prime of life and at the post of duty. In all the relations of life—as a true friend, a good citizen, a skillful physician, and, above all, an earnest humble Christian—he was highly respected. His death is universally lamented.

The "Lady of Lyons" was repeated by the Hospital dramatic troop on a night in February. There were many more visitors from the city than usual. The large hall was densely packed, and all agreed that the presentation was highly honorable to our amateur actors. A string band of cadets, from the University, filled up the intervals of the play with delightful music.

The *Morning Side Mirror* still comes to us with commendable regularity from the Royal Edinburgh Asylum; but the *Excelsior*, from another English hospital, has ceased to put in an appearance. We hope our good humoured castigation of its article on music did not kill it. However we expected for the *Excelsior* only a brief continuance, for excelsior things always "go up," as, see Longfellow. And that particular excelsior manifestly prognosticated its own dissolution, when it affirmed that all Hospital papers are short-lived.

We are under obligations to J. Snow & Co. for packages of newspapers; also to Mrs. Dr. Searcy. Such gifts are most acceptable, and if the good people of the outer world would reflect upon the delight they afford, many more would be despatched hither on errands of mercy. Newspapers most agreeably entertain the mind, and are therefore remedial.

We find on our table a poem entitled "Musings of a Centennial maniac, who desires to represent the institution at the Centennial." The verses having appeared in a Tuscaloosa paper, we shall not print them. The writer need not be uneasy. There will be plenty of lunatics at the Centennial.

The latest agony in the treatment of insanity is subjecting the patient to the violet rays of solar light. The walls of the room are violet colored and the windows are supplied with violet tinted lights. The red, blue and other rays have been found remedial in special cases. Now let them cure chronic drunkenness or methomania by smiling through a violet bottomed tumbler.

Dr. H. B. Wilbur, as the result of his inspection of British Asylums in reference to economy of construction and maintenance of the patients, reports that the management of similar institutions in the State of New York is a public scandal. He says that in many cases the cost of construction, in the ratio of inmates, exceeds that of the most magnificent hotels; while the maintenance of the patients is double what it is in other States, or in Great Britain and the countries of Europe. The whole report of Dr. Wilbur to Gov. Tilden is highly interesting and suggestive.

A debating Club has been organized in the Hospital, and promises to be a source of much enjoyment to the patients.

Insane Delusions.

In a late number we gave an account, taken from a journal published abroad,

of an Insane hospital in which the use of locks was reduced, if not to the *minimum*, to a very low degree. But it must not be supposed that the insane are there allowed to follow fully the bent of their inclinations. Greater liberties, within certain limitations, are allowed them; but the limits are as real as if indicated by strong bars or high walls. In truth, from the very nature of insanity it is evident that its victims must be subjected to discipline of some sort. In bedlams of the olden time, force alone was relied on to restrain or impel. The improvements in modern hospital discipline are due to the substitution of moral forces for physical. Yet behind the modern moral suasions lurk physical coercives. It is with these improvements in hospital discipline as with civilized national intercourse: Behind the polite diplomacy and the Christian brotherly-love arguments, there lurks the old-time *ultima ratio*, the physical force of war.

How far the insane are responsible none but the Most high can know. Modern jurisprudence has emphatically declared that if an individual be unquestionably insane, he should be exempt from all punishments except such as are inseparable from restraints essential to the safety of others.

But within the walls of a hospital is he or is he not held to be responsible? The improvement in hospitals, as we before said, is due to the substitution of moral suasion for physical compulsion. This alone would indicate that he is reckoned responsible; for no one understands by moral suasion that no force but appeals to his better nature is brought to bear upon him. The meaning is that privileges are granted him on conditions. If the conditions are violated the privileges are withheld.

To reason with the insane of conclusions growing out of their delusions is ordinarily as useless as it is absurd. It is like trying to convince of the truth of a mathematical proposition one who sets out with the supposition that twice two are five, or that the sum of all the angles of a triangle are greater or less than two right angles. But that the insane are open to conviction by arguments addressed to their interests is manifest from the circumstance related of a crazy fellow whose delusion was a conviction that it was his duty to carry a heavy slab on his head and drop it on dogs. Many a poor canine felt the force of his descending nonsense. One day he let fall his slab on a dog lying before a tailor's establishment. The tailor, irritated by the cruel and unprovoked injury to the poor animal, came out, and with his yardstick beat the insane fellow till he could scarcely stand. As the beating progressed he exclaimed, now and then: "I'll teach you how to abuse my spaniel!" After recovery from the tailor's chastisement the insane man gave up for a time the slab carrying, and when at length he resumed it, on coming near a dog he would say: "I'd better leave that dog alone; he may be a spaniel!"

Is the Writer of the Following Letter Insane?

Editor of THE METEOR:

I know you would do any service in your power to a fellow-sufferer. I have therefore determined to ask you to make room for a statement of

some particulars of my own case. My object is to convince that I am not insane, though recognizing, as actualities of my daily life, circumstances which are so strange as not to have secured recognition, so far as I know, by the authors of our most advanced works on Physiology and Psychology. The only publication I have met with of similar experiences is in Mrs. Mowatt's "Autobiography of an actress," and some late newspaper accounts of exhibitions of the power of mind-reading. Of the last the editor declared, that though remarkable they were vastly inferior to many others achieved by private performers.

I have been an inmate of several Insane hospitals, and it was not until I had staid some time in the second one that the phenomena to which I wish to call attention made their appearance. I was sent, the first and second time, to a hospital not because I was thought insane, but at my own request, in consequence of a grievous melancholy which had long oppressed me, and and which grew, partly out of impaired physical health, partly out of some circumstances of my past life. It was not until I had been about two years in the second hospital—two and a half in the two—that I became aware of my mind being open to the inspection of others; and for some time thereafter, say for three years, though habitually amazed at the inexplicable anticipation of my words, acts and designs, I did not propose any consistent explanation of the matter. I could conceive of none except miraculous power, and to this I was fain to resort, now and then, when sorely puzzled by it. In the course of the third year after my attention was called to the mind-reading I noticed another and equally strange phenomenon—various unusual sensations in the different parts of my body. Some of these were pleasurable, some very painful, and after a huge mass of testimony of daily experiences, I was convinced that they were neither effects of the tonic medicine I was taking, nor of substances mixed with my food, nor of vapors thrown into my room—all of which theories I had entertained at different times. About this time I found in the Library Mrs. Mowatt's "Autobiography of an actress," and in that book an explanation of the circumstance of my thoughts being known to those about me. For an explanation of the pleasurable and painful feelings that afflicted me by day and by night, I at length adopted the theory of a force projected in some way by the nervous system of others upon my own. Mesmerism I termed it, but there was not in its effects the slightest symptom of the comatose state usually implied by that word. I therefore became quite anxious to leave the establishment that I might abandon the vicinity of those who possessed such fearful control of my nervous system.

After some years I was suffered to go, but all the way to New York, and thence to Memphis, I found myself still under the influence of mind-readers and nerve-vexers. The extent of my sufferings for a year or more it would be difficult to portray. For hours on many consecutive days, I would writhe in the agonies of unnatural chill, fever or headache. Returning to Alabama I was, after the lapse of ten or twelve days, sent to this Hospital as a dangerous person, I having, when utterly exhausted of patience with the artificial pains, made demonstrations alarming to those about me. I staid here two years and a half, and was

never supposed to be insane except upon mind-reading and nerve-fretting. My time was very usefully employed, in reviewing my Latin, Greek and Mathematics. I also read much general literature, and wrote hundreds of pages of essays, tales, dramas and verses, much of which, without the change of a word, was published in popular periodicals, and highly commended. Yet during all this time not a day went by without evidences of the proximity of mind-readers and nerve-vexers.

Released in the middle of the third year, I went North to visit my only child, then about fifteen years old, and though I travelled as far East as Baltimore, as far west as Kansas City, and as far south as New Orleans, I nowhere escaped inflictions of the interest taken in my affairs by mind-readers and nerve-vexers. After eleven months I returned to Alabama on business, and was advised by my relatives to return to this Hospital and remain, as a mere boarder, until they should collect some money from notes left with them. But Dr. Bryce refused on my arrival to suffer me to remain except as a patient, and I have been here ever since. For some months I pretended to have given up a belief in the remarkable facts detailed here, but my detention continuing I learned that I was kept not for the strange beliefs, but for fear that I might base upon them courses of conduct detrimental to others.

I have turned over the pages of many a medical book for attestations of the reality of my supposed facts, and am to-day surprised that such important matters should not have been mentioned in the latest editions of our most advanced works on Physiology, Psychology and even practical Medicine. If, as I believe, its most secret conceptions can be wrenched by another, from the inmost recesses of the brain; if the direct pains may be inflicted by the mere act of another's will, all ought to know it. The vast import of such truths is obvious. It may be that not all brains are as open to inspection as mine; that not all nervous systems respond as readily to the force of another's will.

My chief object in this letter is to gain some clues toward the acquisition of the arts of mind-reading and nerve-vexing. Dozens of persons, some of them quite insane, can read my mind while their's is sealed to me. My nervous system daily responds to the force of others' will, while I cannot make any one sick at the stomach except with ipecac etc., nor give their pain in the head unless with a hickory stick or some of its relations.

Brown Sequard's idea, that the nerve force cannot travel beyond the nerve filaments, may be correct. Then the phenomena may result either from all mind being, like all matter, in perpetual and instant communication, or from the vibrations of a universal medium communicating the acts of one mind to another. In proof that it was not due to prepossession or dominant ideas—Carpenter's device for getting rid of facts which he cannot explain—I adopted several explanations of the sensations before settling upon what I am now convinced is the true one.

I have written this letter to call the attention of the public, and especially Superintendents of Insane hospitals to the subject, and to ask for information of similar experiences. I would also be greatly obliged if some one would send me a book, or the title of one, in which such matters are fairly discussed. A Patient.

* Answers to this communication, addressed to the care of Editor of the METEOR, will be promptly delivered to our bewildered friend.