

The Meteor.

Lucus a non Lucendo.

VOL. 8.]

ALABAMA INSANE HOSPITAL, DEC. 24, 1881.

[NO. 21.]

The Meteor.

The first number of our paper was issued July 4th, 1872, and for five consecutive years it did not once fail to make its appearance on the first month of every quarter of the year. The editor, who was also the printer, disgusted with the long succession of years that still found him at the Hospital, determined to strike a halt in the regular issue, and to print a number only when inclined to do so. Fortunately he had repeatedly warned his readers that any job dependent on the will of a Hospital patient was likely to be irregularly achieved, so that his readers were not surprised when from a quarterly, our paper changed to a semi-occasionally. He thought he could not rightly do less than issue a Christmas number as expressive of our deep gratification with the general prosperity of the American people. They have not achieved all that is possible. It would be a sad day for them if they had done so. But they have achieved wonderful things, and have shown what is still more important, that all the paths of progress, industrial and moral, must not be artificial expedients, but a growth, a development from the aspirations of human souls loosed from every shackle to free speech and a free conscience. Liberty to think and speak freely on all subjects, religious or secular, is the motive force of American progress—a force which is beginning to be felt in all the countries of earth, and which will in no great while bring all nations and peoples to a point from which they can fulfil in letter and spirit the injunction of the great Apostle of Jesus Christ, "Prove all things, and hold fast to that which is good."

The New Building.

At its last session the Legislature of Alabama appropriated \$100,000 for the enlargement of the Hospital buildings. The Superintendent at one time thought of putting up new buildings at the distance of one hundred or more yards from the present one, and appropriate these independent structures exclusively to the accommodation of the chronic insane. It was finally determined to join the new buildings to the old and make them simply additional

wards to the main structure. A section therefore three stories high, with basement rooms for work-shops and storage, will be added to each wing of the Hospital. The new wards, six in all, will be larger than the older wards, and as a consequence the additions when complete will swell the Hospital accommodations more than one-third. This augmentation will be welcomed by large bodies of the people of the State, for although our present building is crowded to its utmost capacity there are hundreds of insane persons in the State for whom their friends have tried vainly to secure a place within its walls. Welcome as will be the additional accommodations, there is no doubt that little time will elapse before the Hospital will be as badly crowded as now, and some unfortunates be forced to plead in vain for admission.

Brick-Making by Machinery

Those who are accustomed to see brick made by the old process of hand-moulding would be greatly interested to watch the operation of our brick-machine. Not only is the very laborious detail of hand-moulding avoided, but the tedious and weary process of thoroughly working the wet dirt, either by machines drawn by horses or oxen or by the feet of these faithful animals. All that is needful to the turning out of good bricks by our machine is an equable supply of the right kind of damp soil. The trituration of the dirt is quickly and thoroughly achieved by iron blades that revolve just above the boxes, at the same time perfectly formed bricks are pressed into moulds at the rate of 2,500 per hour. The machine is driven by a steam-engine. The process, too, of drying in the sun, by which many bricks were frequently lost, is entirely dispensed with. The freshly-moulded bricks are simply set away on planks beneath a capacious shelter. Brick-burning at the Hospital has been invariably a perfect success. Not once, in all the kilns burned, has there been any considerable loss by improper or imperfect burning. The bricks formed by the machine are doubtless better than those formed by hand, since their size is exactly right and they are subjected in the moulds to a severe pressure.

Bathing-House Heated by Exhaust Steam.

Water of the very best quality is used at this Hospital with a liberality which almost seems extravagant. There is a bath-room and bath-tub in every ward, with unfailing supplies of cold and hot water to be had by every one by turning a spigot. Water, an abundance of pure water, hot and cold at will, is reckoned by the Superintendent indispensable adjuncts to the thorough cleanliness of the Hospital building, and the health, comfort and cleanliness of all its inmates. The writer speaks from long experience of the exceeding great comfort of hot water for the whole person or for neck, face and hands in chilly weather. But this liberal supply of cold and hot water to every ward for every needful purpose, together with quantities used for the laundry and the large amounts for the barn and stable must require a fountain of no small capacity. What a noble spring we have is evident from the fact that after all these serious drains upon its capacity much the larger share of its pellucid flow is sent hurrying to the Warrior, making on its way graceful plunges down the curved, terraced ledges of Nellie's Falls. Some of this superfluous water the Superintendent purposes to lead into a large bath-house to be erected just below the spring. In this house he intends to erect a capacious reservoir sufficiently commodious to permit a liberal indulgence in the beautiful art of swimming by the patients and employees of the institution. He purposes to introduce, by pipes, the waste-steam from the engines of the Laundry and Machine-shops, and thus without expense to possess the means for keeping the water of the reservoir at any required temperature winter and summer. Besides the beneficial effect which this method of bathing will exercise upon the physical system of those resorting to it, he thinks it will get to be important in its effect on the mind of the inmates by the diversion which it will afford. Our ladies, we think, will greatly enjoy splashing around in the reservoirs and learning the art of swimming—an accomplishment which ought never to be left out in the education of boy or girl.

Coal-Tar and Health.

During the past summer, there being no demand for the coal-tar resulting from the manufacture of our gas, the tar was allowed to escape into the main sewer of the Hospital. Whether as a consequence of this or for some other reason, we have had no mosquitoes through the summer, and the health of the patients has been exceptionally good. This is the first time for twenty years that the mosquitoes have failed to put in an appearance with us. That

the general atmospheric conditions were favorable to the generation of the insects is evident from their abundance in Tuscaloosa only two miles away.

Walks about the Hospital.

In previous numbers of the METEOR were described at some length special features of the walks about the Hospital. The writer of these articles was at the time, one of the ordinary occupants of the wards, and was therefore limited to such walks as the crowd of patients attended by their nurses were accustomed to take. He has now a key of his own and usually walks alone or attended with one or more dogs. He is free to confess that he enjoys his walks more since he could select their time and place. Yet he is not ashamed to acknowledge that he is at times disposed to envy the walks of those who go in crowds. There is a spiritual influence diffused by a crowd, and shared by all its members, which is absolutely alien to the single person. In great assemblies, whether for industrial, political or religious purposes, individual enthusiasm is multiplied many fold, and whether the occasion be mirthful or solemn, each component of a great gathering, by some mysterious law of man's being, receives and gives, at the same moment, important aids to a right frame of spirit.

Actuated by some such reflections, the writer of the articles on "Strolls about the Hospital" is thinking of requesting the Superintendent to let him again share the multitudinous stroll. But as it would be unreasonable to expect him to go back on his maxim, *nulla vestigia retrorsum*, he will ask to be allowed to join the crowd of ladies.

Addition to Machine-Shop.

The whole task of planning and supervising the erection of the important additions to the Hospital was imposed by the Trustees upon our Superintendent. There were already at the Hospital many provisions for just such work as the new buildings made requisite. In order to execute the work at the lowest figure it was important to substitute machine for hand-work in every possible detail. Although our machine-shop with its appliances was amply sufficient for the ordinary demands of the Hospital, it was not for that and the various new and large jobs requisite for the new building. Several additional machines, to be driven by steam were needed, and for them an enlargement of our machine-shop became needful. This enlargement was ac-

complished by tearing down one end of the shop, extending the side walls and roof twenty feet, and building a new end wall. The masons and carpenters employed on the new building for the West Wing accomplished the enlargement in a few days. We have now, in our capacious shop, a half-dozen wood-working machines, all driven by the same boilers which supply the force for the steam washers and wringers, and the large pump that lifts the spring water to the tanks in the cupola of the centre building.

The following graceful communication was made to the *Mobile Register* a short while back, by Prof. Willoughby Reade, the distinguished elocutionist. As some of the readers of the METEOR may not have seen it, we take the liberty of reproducing it for their benefit:—

Honor to Alabama.

SUNDAY EVENINGS AMONG THE INSANE.—EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-ONE—EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-ONE.

Many years ago, on the continent of Europe, I received an invitation to visit an asylum for the insane.

It was on a Sunday evening, as the sun was setting behind a lofty mountain range, that I entered the forbidding-looking building. A massive iron-barred door was slowly unlocked, heavy bolts withdrawn, and I found myself for the first time among the lunatics. My general impressions may be summed up in a few words—sternness, heartlessness, repression were written on every official face, restraint and mistrust reigning supreme; while, as a reflex on the countenance of three hundred unfortunates whose reason had rebelled, and tottering from her throne had left them worse than dead, one could read little but the most abject fear, malicious cunning, and helpless despair. Jailers and prisoners (for this seemed to be the relation existing between them) alike bore on their brow the stamp, not of an enlightened civilization, but of a mistaken cruelty.

Last Sunday evening I again found myself in an insane hospital.

What a contrast presented itself! In an elegant hall hung with works of art, and the portraits of good women and benevolent men, was assembled a crowd of quiet, happy looking folks, whose appearance and demeanor were as orderly and respectful as of a congregation in a well organized church.

Look on this picture, and on that! The one a jail, a horror, a monstrous libel upon Christendom—the other a Christian home for the mentally distressed and unfortunate—the one in a large city of continental Europe, the other the well-appointed hospital home at Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Under the gracious and gentle presence of the Superintendent's wife all were at ease; a very halo of restfulness environed her, its mild, soothing influence enfolding all, as though the

Divine One had passed by and softly whispered, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you."

Music and cheerful sacred song, in which all joined; suitable readings by an invited guest, who felt as though the really weary ones of earth were left in the outer world, happily filled two hours of the Sunday evening.

The Superintendent, Dr. Peter Bryce, beloved and honored by all, wise, courteous and thoughtful, sat among his patients, a power for good, a light to them sitting in mental darkness, and as the shadow of a great rock to the troubled souls around him. A scene this to be remembered always—an honor to Alabama—a praise in her borders; a beacon-light of Christian philanthropy flinging its merciful beams into thousands of disconsolate hearts.

Away with the notion that the world is growing worse! It is not, it cannot be true, while the blessed power of advancing Christian civilization, sanctified medical skill and culture, can thus illumine the mid-night of these bereft ones, and raise with their benign touch so many a mental wreck to the stature of a man!

America may justly boast of her wealth and power, her intellect and refinement, her political, social, and material advancement, and her all but infinite resources—but her highest honor, her greatest glory, her most enduring fame, shall be found in such scenes and institutions as this, and in all untiring effort to ameliorate human woe, to raise the depraved and unfortunate and to hasten the coming of that Kingdom which is "righteousness, and peace and joy in holy spirit!"

I'd rather calm a troubled heart,
And cool a burning brain,
Than I would play the conqueror's part,
Or forge the captive's chain.

Better to ease one heavy load
On the weary way of life,
Than wear the shining laurel crown
As victor in the strife.

Nobler a fettered mind to free,
A human soul unchain,
Than monarch of the globe to be,
And o'er the world to reign.

We have several very superior milch-cows, one of which gives, at her best, eight gallons per day,

Dr. Thos. S. Kirkbride.

This distinguished American alienist has recently issued a new and enlarged edition of his valuable book on the *Construction and Organization of Hospitals for the Insane*. If Dr. Kirkbride had done nothing else but write this book he would deserve to take high rank among the benefactors of his race. He has been engaged continuously in the care and treatment of the insane, longer than any other Superintendent in this country; and has done, perhaps, proportionally more for his specialty. May his valuable life long be spared to the great cause in which it has been enlisted!

Isaac Ray, M. D., LL. D.

Dr. Isaac Ray, the nestor of Psychological Medicine in America, and of whom most of our intelligent readers have often heard, died at his residence in Philadelphia, on the 31st March, 1881. Dr. Ray was the most accurate, industrious and systematic writer on diseases of the mind in America. He has contributed more, perhaps, to the permanent standard literature of Insanity than all the Alienists and other writers on the subjects in this country put together. His *Medical Jurisprudence of Insanity* has a worldwide celebrity, and is said to be the best book on the subject yet written in any country. We remember having read his little book on *Mental Hygiene* with interest and profit. His quaint and suggestive paper on *Ideal Characters of Officers of a Hospital for the Insane* was a gem of its kind. It inspired the editor of the METEOR to attempt to write, in the same strain, *The Good Patient*, which pleased Dr. Ray so well that he was kind enough to promise to publish it as a supplement to the next edition of his *Ideal Officers*.

Dr. Ray was as lovely and gentle in character and manner as he was great and learned in mind. He was the highest type of a gentleman, a Christian and a scholar, and in his death the Medical profession and the world at large sustained a loss that will not soon be repaired.

Newspapers.

The variety which is part and parcel of the newspaper makes it an exceedingly grateful resort not only for the man of the world worn with physical or mental labor, but for the weak and sick. No kind of reading matter is more prized in the Hospital than newspapers. Patients seize them greedily, and read them with assiduity, especially those printed in the counties from which they came. The friends of many patients so seldom write them, that their only means of learning of their acquaintances, and of events transpiring at home, is through their county newspapers. It is for this reason that we have so frequently appealed to the liberality of Alabama publishers for newspapers for the Hospital. We chronicle with pleasure the names of the following furnished gratuitously to the patients, and we would be much pleased if the number were multiplied several fold, as it might easily be by the publishers in the State:

Argus, Selma; Advocate, Greenville; Beacon, Greensboro; Clarion, Tuskaloosa; Democrat, Huntsville; Gazette, Tuskaloosa; Herald, Scottsboro; Iron Age, Birmingham; Index, Selma; Independent, Birmingham; Immigrant, Cullman; Journal, Livingston; Journal, Union Springs; Mirror, Eutaw; News, Tuskegee; News, Blountsville; Register, Mobile; Sentinel, Columbiana; Times, Tuska-

loosa; West Alabamian, Carrollton; Whig and Observer, Eutaw.

The following are furnished from abroad:

Advocate, Nashville, Tenn.; Examiner, Aberdeen, Miss.; Morning Side Mirror, Edinburgh, Scotland; Southern Presbyterian, Columbia, S. C.; Southwestern Presbyterian, New Orleans, La.

The Literary, Musical and Social Club of the Alabama Insane Hospital.

The above is an association of patients, employees and officers of the Hospital for mutual improvement and diversion. The meetings of the Club take place every other week. The officers are a President and Secretary. There are, however, two Standing Committees with the power of officers. One of these committees, composed of officers of the institution, pass privately on the names of all proposed for membership. Their action is private to avoid possible offence to rejected applicants. The other committee at every meeting of the Club appoints readers, declaimers and musicians for the next session.

The calling of the roll is the first business attended to. The names are called in alphabetical order, first the males and then the females—(and this in our progressive age! tell it not to Mrs. Livermore! by a female Secretary!)—As each name is called, its owner, instead of answering as in most societies, *here, or present*, rises and repeats one or several lines of poetry. After the roll-call the minutes of the previous meeting are read for approval or amendment. Then follows, *seriatim*, reading, declamation and music, vocal or instrumental, or both. At each meeting there are three readings, three declamations and three musical performances. When these have all been accomplished there is a recess for conversation, refreshments and the meeting of the committees.

After recess the appointments for the next meeting are read aloud, miscellaneous business is transacted and questions are answered. These questions are prepared carefully beforehand, and distributed by the Secretary, soon after each meeting, to one dozen or more of the members, to be answered at the next meeting. The questions comprise principles of natural philosophy, historical events, literary criticism and in truth any point which it may seem to the questioner needs clearing up. The questions answered, adjournment takes place, when a pretty free

criticism is given to the whole proceedings.

In the erection of last year's annex to the centre-building, the Superintendent having the wants of the Club in view, had one room designed especially for its meetings. The room is smaller than our general Amusement Hall, is round, divided in its lower part into eight divisions by doors and windows, is well lighted, and admirably adapted to the purposes to which it is applied. Four large circular book-cases well-filled with handsome books, are set against four divisions of the walls and fit so closely against the circular walls as to occupy but a small portion of the inclosed circular area of the room. We call this room the *rotunda*. The whole room is attractive in its every feature, and many of the happiest periods in Hospital life are passed by many patients in it.

This Club has been in operation for about two years, and the interest in its proceedings has never flagged. However illiterate be a patient or nurse, they can participate in some of the proceedings, and for those ambitious of elocutional distinction there is good occasion for the display of ability and for improvement and effective renditions of literary or musical compositions. We unhesitatingly recommend to the Superintendents of all Insane Hospitals the inauguration of similar associations. The participation of the officers is of course necessary to impart dignity and enforce decorum in the conduct of the various business.

Mortality in Hospitals.

The success of the medical department of a hospital for the insane may be measured by various standards. We are satisfied that the true measure of medical efficiency will be most certainly indicated, all conditions of locality, etc., being equal, by the proportion of deaths on the average number under treatment. In early times this proportion in some hospitals mounted as high as 13 per cent. Nine per cent. is now regarded as the highest limit under normal conditions. Where this figure is exceeded it is probable that the natural effects of the disease are intensified by preventable causes. By such standard, this Hospital makes an excellent showing, the rate of mortality for the last twelve months being as low as 6 per cent., and for the two years previous less than that, and the probabilities are, that it will fall far below this in the current twelve months.

THE METEOR.

PUBLISHED AT THE INSANE HOSPITAL.

TUSKALOOSA, DEC. 24TH, 1881.

EDITED BY A PATIENT.

Merry Christmas.

The patients of the Alabama Insane Hospital, through their only organ of communication with the great world, the METEOR, send cheerful greetings, and wish a merry Christmas to all their kins-folk, friends and acquaintances. May they in the gladness which the festival was intended to diffuse cease, during the holidays, to be dominated by worldly cares, and, above the stayed storms of anxiety for earthly successes, hear the angelic voices chanting as in Palestine nearly nineteen hundred years ago. The holy and inspiring refrain of the angelic choir was but the outcrop of a divine impulse which will throb down the ages, and in the hearts of those whose hope is in the Most High will never cease at this season to ring the celestial refrain, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good will to men." Let each who catches the inspiration send it reverberating round to friends and neighbors who are possibly less favored by the divine spirit. Let them also not forget the example of the holy shepherds in seeking the divine babe. He or she who on Christmas day finds a poor family and ministers to their necessities finds the infant Jesus as truly as if their feet had trodden the rude threshold of the divine stable.

May all the readers of the METEOR, all friends of the Hospital, all lovers of whatsoever is true and good, gain in the innocent abandonments of the Holy season new gratitude for the mighty gifts of life, and new aspirations to expend every power of soul and body in high and holy endeavors that will be pleasing to Him by whom and for whom all created existences were called into being, and who loveth every human being with a depth and tenderness of affection surpassing that of mothers towards their dependent babes.

Prayer.

A friend who has made a study of mind propounds the following ingenious theory of prayer, calculated to answer some objections of sceptics:—The Mind is unquestionably, in its roots, its lower aspects, tied down to and conditioned for its right actions on material, bodily states. But in its methods of action and its higher as-

pects, it mounts above all material limitations and acknowledges principles and laws peculiar to itself. While therefore on its lower side amenable to material, corporeal influences, on its higher and nobler side, it must be from its very nature, open to immaterial, spiritual influences. Admitting this, it is easy to see how prayer may be answered by the Creator without violating a single law of nature. The individual, for instance prays for relief from disease. His mind receives from on high a spiritual impulse in answer, which reacting upon his whole organism conquers the disease. Or, praying for the cure of another person, a spiritual influence descends upon that person's mind and through the influence brought upon it, the whole body is affected so potentially as to rectify the depraved conditions. Whole communities, and States even, might thus be advantageously influenced by prayer bringing down upon all or some of them celestial influences which reacting upon their bodies and courses of conduct, might accomplish striking changes for the better. In all such cases not one principle of the laws of the material world is for a moment infringed; for the marvellous influence of the Mind on the body is as much bound up in the laws of Nature as the influence of the sun or moon on the level of the ocean.

Whether the laws or courses of Nature are in any case set aside by prayer is not considered in the above theory which was only intended to show even from the most rigidly scientific aspect, that the most striking results, not otherwise attainable, might be achieved by prayer, without any interference with such laws. And on this supposition, it would not have been unreasonable in the Christians of New York, some years since, to have accepted Prof. Tyndall's challenge in reference to the cure of patients in Hospitals.

Hospital Statistics.

During the year ending Sept. 30, 1881, there were 229 applications for the admission of patients into the Alabama Insane Hospital, of which 143 were admitted, and 86 refused admittance for want of room. During the year 86 patients were discharged cured; 32 were discharged more or less improved; and 28 died. The total number under treatment during the year were 545; and the daily average 413. There remained in the Hospital at close of the year 417. The rate of cures on the number admitted is about 47 per cent.; and the rate of deaths on the average number under treatment something over 6 per cent.

As there was no meeting of the Legislature this year, the usual Annual Report of the Officers of the Hospital was not printed. It will appear next November in the form of a biennial report to the Legislature.

All the Hospital printing—and it is not a little—is done in the METEOR office.

Responsibility for Crime.

In the late trial of Mrs. Elizabeth Coleman for the murder of George T. Coles in the city of New York, Chief Justice Davis, in his charge to the jury, stated that the test of responsibility for criminal acts in the State of New York, is the capacity of the accused to distinguish between right and wrong at the time, and with respect to the act which is the subject of judicial inquiry."

The insufficiency of this "test" must be apparent to every one who has closely studied the methods of the insane. Confirmed lunatics are continually committing acts which they know at the time to be illegal and wrong, and which they sometimes adroitly attempt to conceal. The kleptomaniac, as every one knows, steals and attempts to conceal the theft; and the victims of the more pronounced forms of insanity are perpetually perpetrating breaches of law and morals which they know to be wrong. Not only so, but confirmed and violent lunatics are as often restrained from the perpetration of such offenses by the fear of punishment. Every one who has had much experience with the insane has observed these every day facts. The test of responsibility should therefore include not only the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, but the power to pursue the right and avoid the wrong.

But it is very questionable if it be possible to frame any formula that will include or rather exclude all the phenomena of insanity—any test by which every case, or even a larger number of cases, may be satisfactorily tried. It is easy, if this were the proper place for such exposition, to show why this must always be the case, or at least continue to be so, until the laws and mysterious operations of the human mind are better understood. For the present then, the only safe and sensible proceeding in the determination of criminal responsibility will be to judge every case upon its own merits. After thorough investigation into the antecedents, habits, character, condition as to health or disease, inherited tendencies, etc., etc., of the accused, conducted by experts and others whose opportunities and powers of observation qualify them for such office, an intelligent jury, we believe, would be better qualified to reach correct conclusions than by the application of certain "tests" that experience has shown may be so contorted and twisted as to mean anything or nothing.

It is earnestly hoped that the learned Judge of the Court now engaged in the trial of Guiteau, with the aid of his splendid corps of medical experts and practiced attorneys, may be enabled to cut loose from the precedents and authorities of a century past, and enunciate for future guidance, principles of jurisprudence commensurate, not only with the great case he is trying, but with the great advances that have been made within the past decade or two in other departments of social science.

Since our last issue, Prof. Willoughby Reade, who is well known to thousands as an elocutionist, gave two gratuitous exhibitions of his skill at the Hospital.

Answers to Correspondents.

L. M.—Has science done away with Hell?

No; it has only reduced its temperature—from that of molten granite to that of boiling water. Theologians, however, expect when Bob Ingersoll departs this life that the old temperature will be regained.

A. R.—Is not the earth really flat instead of round?

Yes; and it is now proposed, by means of dynamite, to enlarge the openings in it that the sun, moon and stars may more easily pass through, and thus shorten the nights so as to put a stop to all employments after sundown. One of the probable results will be the abolition of the theatre and the disuse of jewels in wearing apparel.

VIDETTE.—Ought one to be serious or jocular in company?

There is no invariable rule. One must be serious or jocose according to circumstances. Serious folks get credit for more sense than they have, their stock deteriorating for lack of adequate airing. Habitual jesters are usually bankrupt of wisdom from expending all that comes to them in firing squibs.

ETTIE.—Do dreams ever come true?

Yes; dreams do sometimes come true, as for instance, when a married man dreams that his head is becoming bald. But dreams on religious matters are most reliable. As a proof of this, persons who dream of dying are very apt to dream that they went to the bad place.

B. W. S.—“Why the appetite for food should be greater than proper?” is a difficult question to answer. Mr. Herbert Spencer, somewhere in his philosophy, says that calling to mind the conditions of the aboriginal man, we shall find an explanation of this apparent anomaly in the fact, that the irregularity in his supplies of food necessitated an ability to eat largely when food was attainable, and necessitated, therefore, a corresponding desire. Now that the supplies of food have become regular, and no contingent periods of long fasting have to be provided against, the desire is in excess and has to be abated.” Our explanation is different. It is in brief that the Lord sends men food, but the devil sends the cooks. Badly cooked food keeps one in a state of semi-starvation and causes them, especially if an angel presides for a few days in the kitchen, to eat to repletion.

A. F.—Is insanity ketching?

Yes; insanity is “ketching.” Every one should be careful about sleeping in the same room with a person afflicted with the disease lest they “ketch it.” We have known several such cases.

AMICUS.—Is Friday really an unlucky day?

Yes; but chiefly for people condemned to be hanged. Marrying on Friday is apt to result badly unless the parties know each other well. For young women of shobbish tastes an in-

troductory to foreign counts on Friday is ill-omened.

ENQUIRER.—How far is Tuskalooza from the Hospital?

The distance to Tuskalooza depends on circumstances. In walking over it to see an animal show or a circus, or to go shopping, it is less than two short miles. In going to church it is three thousand four hundred and forty-five measured—yards.

O. H.—Which is most trustworthy, science or religion?

It is hard to say whether science or religion is most trustworthy, as both are demonstrably true. In the construction of a house the dicta of science are more reliable, but in means to avoid a drought religion is generally resorted to. The American fashion is to trust to science as far it will go, and then tie on to religion.

JACK.—At what season of the year do 'Possums get ripe?

When persimmons get fat.

P. D.—Is there any rule for telling insanity?

There is no absolute line of demarcation between sanity and insanity from the scientific point of view. But from the practical point of view there is. The great majority of lunatics are outside of Insane Hospitals. It matters not how crazy a person be, so long as he minds only his own business he is not reckoned insane. The practical line of demarcation then is letting or not letting alone other peoples' affairs.

Papers for Sunday Reading.

Besides the careful distribution of ordinary newspapers, which is never omitted, we distribute on Sunday to each ward a package of papers for Sunday reading. This package is made up of pictorials and religious papers. Many patients who cannot read, or are too sick to care to do so, find pleasure in turning over the pages of the pictorial papers. Each package of pictorial and religious papers is returned to the Librarian on Monday morning and on next Sunday does duty for another ward, any missed or lost ones being replaced by new supplies. All pictorials and religious papers sent the Hospital are preserved for this special purpose.

We are indebted to the ladies of Mobile, through Mrs. Ann T. Hunter, for a large supply of church papers and periodicals. Other kind persons, whose names do not occur to us at this moment, have been in the habit of reserving instead of destroying, their pictorials and religious papers and sending them to us.

We commend this example to all our readers hoping that many of them will imitate it, as it will cost them only the few cents needful for postage. Bear in mind, that every pictorial and religious paper sent to

the Hospital, finds its way to the twenty wards of the institution, and is thus seen by all the five hundred persons connected with it.

Prof. John Lowry.

This eminent instructor in elocution in the University of the South, at Seawancee, Tenn., spent a portion of his vacation with Dr. and Mrs. Bryce. During his sojourn with us, he not only delighted our Club with readings and recitations, but also instructed gratuitously several of our more ambitious members in the art of elocution. The Professor, we believe, is a bachelor, and the best wish we can make for him is, that he may soon find a mate worthy of so genial and accomplished a gentleman.

Assassination and Insanity.

We have read with intense interest an Essay, entitled as above, by the Hon. Wm. R. Smith, editor of the *Law-Central*, Washington, D. C. Judge Smith is a native and former resident of Tuskalooza, Ala. As a lawyer, especially as an advocate in criminal cases, he has certainly no superior and probably few equals in this or any other State. He is besides a *litterateur* and a writer, both in prose and verse, of high order. Those interested in the trial of Guiteau, and of others who have been arraigned in times past for attempts upon the lives of Rulers, will do well to procure a copy of this Essay. Certainly every lawyer and medical expert ought to have a copy.

Expertism.

Dr. James G. Kiernan, of Chicago, who was put upon the stand as an Expert in the trial of Guiteau, when asked “What is the proportion of insane people to sane people in the world?” replied that, “Five out of every twenty-five were probable insane!” To the question, “Whether it was not common for the insane to reason logically on false premises?” he answered that it was not. “They may appear to do so,” he replied, “but you cannot say how much logic enters into their reasoning.” To the inquiry as to his religious bias, the Doctor replied that he was an agnostic.

Taking the above as the Doctor's views on the prevalence of insanity and of the fundamental principles of reasoning, some of his brother Experts, we fear, will class him as an “agnostic” in psychiatry as well as religion.

Hereditary Insanity.

Insanity is generally a result of heredity. The late Dr. Ray believed that it is so always. But as with other diseases, the constitutional seeds of the disease, may be dormant till roused by conjunction of circumstances. In this latter sense many of the ordinary causes of disease may be causes of insanity. Mental application, instead of being adverse to sanity, especially pro-

motes health, both of mind and body. Many persons war with the integrity of their minds by thinking out of proportion to the materials for thought. The brain, in such cases, is like a mill-stone always on the go, yet ill supplied with corn to be ground. Woe to the brain that thinks and thinks without liberal supplies of material for thought.

Punishment and Restraint.

Every family which counts an insane member, all friends of the afflicted and every well-wisher of his kind, must feel great interest in the subject of restraint in Hospitals for the Insane. We have repeatedly written on this point, but as it is important, we allude to it here only to note the great change which has taken place in the matter in the care of insane persons. In all rightly conducted Hospitals the whole apparatus of devices for personal restraint has ceased to be, and restraint is confined to the very few cases in which some very simple device is needful to prevent destruction of articles of dress.

Restraint was formerly a facile means of punishment, and the revolution which is going on in the public mind in reference to punishments of all kinds, has no doubt exercised a decided influence in its abrogation. The conviction is now almost universal with all well informed persons that all punishment that is not disciplinary or remedial is absolutely wrong. Arbitrary punishment of children is generally conceded to be not only false in principle, but detrimental to the character both of the punished and the punisher. Brutality is the true word to rightly express the state of heart which habitually presides in the punishment of children. All punishments to be beneficial must not only be destitute of retaliatory, revengeful animus, but must be as far as possible like those inflicted by God's Providence—must be a natural result of the evil courses intended to be stamped with reprobation. Punishments of this kind, with every atom of animosity eliminated, and coming on one as natural and inevitable results of their own evil courses, are in the highest sense disciplinary and reformatory. All others are merely attempts to right wrongs by duplicating them, and in principle, are very much more absurd than the old apothegm about the hair of the dog curing the bite; for they involve not the hygienic value of the hair, but of a veritable biting of the dog by the person bit.

Occupation of the Insane.

Useful occupation is still regarded at the Hospital a most valuable remedial agent in the treatment of insanity. Quite a troop of the male patients go out daily to work on the farm, and quite as many more are made useful at work in keeping the wards in proper condition. Every lady patient who can do even a little work is encouraged to do what she can—the tastes of all being as far as possible regarded in the kinds of work to be done. Not unfrequently the patients have learned in the Hospital trades of which they were before utterly ignorant.

The Object of our Paper.

One of the objects of the METEOR, perhaps the very chief, is to furnish the friends and patrons of the Hospital, the editors of the newspapers in the State, and last, but not least, the members of our State Legislature, with such varied descriptions of the institution and the great purposes it has in view, as it is impossible to convey to them in any other way. The contents of the METEOR, therefore, takes in a wide range of subjects all of which, however, have a bearing more or less direct upon the condition, management and prospects of the Hospital and the welfare of the insane. As our little paper too, will find its way to persons of different tastes and degrees of culture, it must necessarily furnish a variety of pabulum in order to suit all. We hope that the present number, which is larger than any of its predecessors, will meet with the approval of its readers. The articles in this number, though not signed, have been written by quite a number of persons connected with the Hospital.

B. L. Wyman, M. D.

Dr. B. L. Wyman, has been Assistant Physician of the Alabama Insane Hospital for eight months, since May 1st. The position is one of great responsibility for so young a man, but he has discharged the duties of his post with such satisfaction to the Superintendent that he is regarded as a most valuable acquisition to the Hospital. He has, too, by his patience and courtesy in dealing with the patients and employees, professionally and socially, endeared himself to them, and has secured a degree of affection and veneration which is ordinarily reserved for older men and more prolonged acquaintance. An explanation of his success is found in the exceptional advantages he has enjoyed. Born of learned parents—his mother a highly educated woman, his father for a length of time a most prominent Professor at the University of Alabama—he has through life had every incentive to mental development. A Graduate with honors at the Alabama State University, graduating afterwards in the Medical Department University Virginia, and at University Medical College, City of N. York, he was for some time connected, with more than one very large Hospital in New York City. We have not learned if he proposes to make a speciality of insanity. His scholarly discipline and habits, excellent judgment, and keen perception admirably qualify him to aspire to exceptional success in the analysis of mental disorders and the selection of remedies therefor. As questions in reference to

Mind are the most important and interesting that engage modern science, it is to be hoped that he will conclude that the paths of difficulty are the paths of honor, and devote himself to the mastery of the problems of Mind in health and disease.

Protection of Hospitals against Fire.

In view of the frequent destructions by fire of retreats provided for the insane, the protection of such buildings from that danger has become both interesting and important. The Superintendent years ago made every preparation which his means allowed, for fighting fire at the Hospital. Besides several Babcock fire extinguishers, large quantities of hose of good size and in convenient lengths, were wound on hose-wagons kept in very accessible places. The male employees of the Hospital are now and then instructed as to the right method of bringing into use, in the event of fire, both the extinguishers and the hose. But from a diligent study of the whole subject of protection against fire, he is satisfied that any system is radically defective in which supplies of water must be had from the endangered building. The rapid spread of the fire usually so interferes with the water-pipes as to render the water stored in tanks in the upper part of a burning building unavailable. He purposes, therefore, at his earliest opportunity to obtain a good steam-fire engine to be manned by the outside employees of the institution. The efforts of the nurses, in the event of a fire, would properly be confined to caring for the patients—removing them from the wards, conducting them to places of safety and supervising their conduct during the excitement inevitable to such casualty. There are already available for a good fire-engine two supplies of water external to the Hospital building. The one in front is the reservoir about the fountain. The one in the rear is the gas reservoir. Both of these always contain large quantities of water which would be available by a fire engine, and which under no circumstances could be rendered unavailable by fire within the building. The Hospital buildings have never cost the State one cent for insurance and in view of the great calamity of a possibly destructive fire it seems to us that the idea of a good steam fire-engine is timely and the height of genuine economy and practical wisdom.

Tuskaloosa county is not a grass country, but we get good beef for the Hospital for \$3.49.

Partial Insanity.

The title of this article may seem absurd to persons familiar with insanity. It is a fact that insanity can not be total unless there is loss of consciousness. But there are cases in which there is so general a depravation of the mental power that the subjects of the disease are utterly unfit for society, or for the right discharge of even the simplest matters of business. On the other hand, there are many cases in which while the judgment is entirely unimpaired in reference to most matters, on particular subjects the individual entertains the wildest notions. It would astonish those not conversant with lunacy to discover how perfectly sane many lunatics are on some subjects, while being on others utterly irrational. On the face of it, this would seem to imply that every subject of thought is allied to a special portion of the brain, or that a particular tract of the brain is specially devoted to particular subjects. If this were so, it would be easy to see how, when a certain tract of brain is disordered, the resulting insanity might be limited to a particular subject of thought. But such a theory is untenable, for while the tracts of brain are limited, the subjects of thought are practically infinite. A more philosophical explanation of the matter will be readily grasped by those who know something of permutations—that with only a very limited number of figures the order in which they may be arranged is practically countless. Instead, therefore, of supposing that each subject of thought requires a special tract of brain, let us suppose that it requires a special combination of tracts. Then if there were only an hundred different tracts of brain and each subject required as the physical basis of the thoughts about it, from six to twelve tracts, it is easy to see that the subjects of thought might be countless and yet every one find a special physical basis in the brain, for the thoughts connected with them. This theory would readily explain the existence of insanity on special subjects only. For if every subject of thought required for its right entertainments the cooperation of certain small tracts of brain, the brain tracts might all be in a normal state, yet if the white fibres connecting them are diseased, the thought would be disordered by lack of coordinate action of all the necessary tracts. The derangement of a tract of gray substance would necessarily disorder all orders of thought in which it was accustomed to be employed. The truth of this view of the matter is rendered probable by the countless white fibres which run in all directions in the brain, and thus make practicable the combination of several or many parts of the brain as the exigencies of the process of thinking may demand.

The work of fitting the University Grove for the use of our patients has already begun. As soon as a few ditches are dug to get rid readily of the surface water, and a few useless trees cut down to give more room to those left, and the ground be scarified and planted to grass, this grove will contribute a very valuable addition to our resources for amusement, its fine shades making it an admirable resort for strolling and other parties in summer.

Mr. Editor:—Will you allow me through the medium of your interesting journal, to thank our learned and highly esteemed friend, Dr. Goree, in behalf of the patients of the Hospital, for his very interesting and instructive Sunday evening lectures upon the Bible. I would like very much to give your readers a synopsis of his last lecture, but fear that in attempting it I might do him injustice and consume too much of your valuable space. Suffice it to say, that they are replete with much valuable information, are delivered in a very pleasing style, and are highly enjoyed by all those who attend. The lectures which have been given were rather introductory to an extended course upon the Scriptures which he thinks of delivering in the Rotunda on Sunday evenings.

We congratulate the Doctor upon his success, and wish him God speed in his future labors. The Doctor also delivers lectures to the colored inmates, male and female.

Christmas Festivities.

Christmas is too important a period to be suffered to go by without commemoration. It is the beautiful and un failing basis of all other sacred festivals. In our day there are devout Christians disposed, in discussing the claims of Christianity, to evade giving prominence to the miracles recorded in connection with it. But they surely forget that the incarnation is the miracle of all miracles—the one stupendous manifestation of God's direct intervention in human affairs—which makes all other miracles sink into insignificance.

Our celebration will be conducted as usual, on Christmas-Eve, in the large Amusement Hall. The exercises will be opened with carols by the large Hospital choir. To this will succeed the distribution of Christmas presents. These will not be presents in name merely, but a handsome and useful gift will be made to every component of the crowd of inmates of the Hospital present on the occasion. Many of these presents were made at the Hospital, by the lady nurses and patients under the supervision of the Matron, especially for distribution on the occasion. But the most beautiful, the most showy presents will be from a large supply furnished by those generous and un failing friends of the institution, Friedman & Loveman, of the Atlanta Store, Tuscaloosa.

After the distribution of presents other carols or glees will be sung. To these will succeed the most bountiful supply of good things for the inner man. These latter will not only be abundant in quantity but excellent and varied in quality. Some of our ladies have promised to pre-

pare pieces for recitation, and if time permits one or more of these will be introduced before the final music and songs of the evening.

"Watchman, let thy wanderings cease,
Lie thee to thy quiet home.
Traveller, lo! the Prince of Peace,
Lo! the son of God is come."

Tramways and Tramways.

In its rear the Hospital presents an aspect that closely resembles the vicinity of some Railroad depots. Railways winding in and out from various directions, the loaded cars rumbling over them, the two great chimneys pouring forth dense volumes of smoke, while the gush, gush, of the escaping steam from the steam pump at the spring and the engine that drives the laundry apparatus and that of the machine shops, all close a hand, are strongly suggestive of that stirring tide of business which marks the vicinity of prominent depots. Beside the coal-mine tramway which as it approaches the rear of the Hospital divides and sub-divides to facilitate the delivery of coal at various points, there is the tramway running to the brickyard, and still another and larger one, running to a rivulet bordering the Hospital tract on the east, from which we could only get adequate supplies of good sand for building the walls of the new additions to the Hospital. The two first tramways have been laid and used for some years. The last was constructed this year solely on account of the demands of the late additions to the Hospital buildings now going up.

It is said the Porte has ordered the re-building of Solomon's temple at Jerusalem. Julian, the apostate, it will be remembered brought to such an attempt the whole power of the imperial executive of the great Roman Empire. He failed, as devout eastern Christians and Roman Catholics believe, by the direct intervention of Jehovah—the flames issuing from the earth and driving away the workmen. Will the Sultan's endeavor meet with the same or a similar result? *Nous verrons.*

We have just remodeled and enlarged our steam-drying room, according to plans furnished by the Boston Laundry Company. There are twenty-seven horses or racks, each independent, and moving on wheels. The five hundred dozen clothes washed at the Hospital during a week can be dried in the absence of sun-shine—which is always the best dryer—as fast as they are washed.

Dr. Bryce was subpoenaed to testify as an expert in the Guiteau case, but his Matron and Steward both being absent, he was very kindly excused by Mr. Scoville.

Dr. H. P. Cochrane.

Since our last issue, our talented and efficient assistant physician, whose name appears above, has left us to enter into the private practice of his profession in the thriving city of Birmingham. He held the position of Assistant Physician in the Hospital for five consecutive years.

He was married on the 11th of May last to Miss Lala Mudd, daughter of our distinguished Judge and Jurist, Hon. Wm. S. Mudd. The night before Dr. C.'s departure, an entertainment was given him in our capacious Amusement Hall, where a handsome present was tendered him by the nurses and other employees of the Hospital, as an expression of their high appreciation and regard. It is useless to say we miss the Doctor's genial face and manner. We wish him success in his new field of labor and hope he may find as true friends there as he leaves behind.

The North Pole.

It strikes us that there is altogether too much scattering in endeavors to penetrate the extreme polar regions. Instead of a long line of posts encircling the pole would it not be better to have the line of posts pointed straight toward it? By having these posts within short distances of each other, so that the occupants could now and then communicate with each other, and having the most advanced posts well supplied with every appliance for pressing on and establishing still more advanced posts, definite and steady advances towards the pole would be assured. As it is, we have year by year an iteration of the same old experiences of the hardships of Arctic explorations, with little additions to our actual knowledge of the extreme polar regions.

We are grieved to hear that the health of Miss D. L. Dix has so declined, that most of her time is spent in her own room. Miss Dix would never tell her own age, but it is probable that she has outlived the period allotted in Scripture to man. How delightful must be her reflections, as she stands near the brink of the grave, upon the manner in which all the years of her mature life have been spent—in endeavors to alleviate the sufferings of afflicted humanity. Think of this, ye vain and foolish women whose time is spent in selfish and frivolous employments.

The additions to the Hospital will hardly be completed in less than four years from the date of the Bill making the appropriation. By the terms of the Bill only \$25,000 could be expended annually. This feature was engrafted in order that too great strain might not be put upon the Treasury of the State in any one year.

The Gulteau Case.

As our paper comes from an insanity head-quarters, some expression of opinion on the above may be expected of us. Although not an expert, we have seen so many cases of the disease that we have watched with great interest the various phases of the vexed question that is now agitated at the capital of the country.

One of the strongest points for the defence was the alleged insane diathesis of his family. How much force this is likely to exert will be evident from a fact stated in another article of our paper, that heredity goes so far before all other causes of insanity as to have led some distinguished alienists to be profoundly convinced that in its absence all other so-called causes of the disease fail to eventuate in mental derangement. The testimony on that point, which for a time seemed very clear, has become very contradictory. If, however, it should be established to the satisfaction of the jury that the assassin's friends, years ago, consulted a highly respectable physician in reference to his suspected insanity it ought, we think, to heighten greatly the presumption of mental disorder. Even if the physician consulted was not an expert the fact that the question of insanity was so seriously entertained as to induce formal medical examination of the point goes far to strengthen the truth of the claim in the prisoner's favor.

One thing is certain. The assassin will fail in one chief object, to prove that he is a man of ability. He is clearly weak-minded, with only such qualities of intellect as go to make the unsuccessful sharper.

His conduct in the past and his actions during the trial show that he is very peculiar. A fruitful source of these eccentricities, we think, has been his inordinate vanity. Even if not insane, his mind was ever badly balanced.

We waited with much interest the testimony of the distinguished experts. Up to the present time this has been made to amount to nothing, in consequence of the restriction to the silly hypothetical case. This testimony ought to have come last, and each expert should have been allowed to swear if he thought the accused responsible or not, and why.

An attempt to decide, as some courts have done, whether an admitted delusion was connected with the unlawful act, is altogether too nice a point to be of much regard in the ordinary administration of justice. If the action of the mind in any point be confessedly abnormal it is impossible to say how far all its actions may be influenced by the unnatural element. For, although the mind, in one view, is made up of separate powers, in another it is an indivisible unit, in which the action of the whole is ever qualified by the right or wrong action of the various parts.

The young ladies at the University are getting up a play for the benefit of the Hospital patients. By young ladies of the University is not meant lady-students. Alabama has not got that far along yet. Only the daughters of the Professors are meant. We failed to hear if the play were to be original or borrowed. By all means let it be like most of Shakspeare's, borrowed with material amendments.

Meteoric Dust.

During the summer croquet and archery on the lawn were the popular past-times. Since the commencement of cool weather—none cold yet—conversations, card parties and dancing are all the go. Dancing ranks high in all Hospitals as a useful diversion for the insane.—As many as six patients left us one morning lately to return to their friends, the machinery of their upper story all in excellent running order.—The Trustees paid us their usual annual visit. So far as we have learned, they found everything in a satisfactory condition. They are all gentlemen of broad culture, well and widely known. Their department has so endeared them to the officers, patients and employees of the Hospital that their visits are expected with much pleasure. Dr. Jno. Little, Jr., Cashier of the First National Bank of Tuscaloosa, was by them made Treasurer of the Hospital, vice Jo. McLester resigned.—Dr. B. Leon Wyman, our new Assistant Physician makes a very efficient President of the Literary, Musical and Social Club.—We are furnishing the University with gas at \$1.50 per thousand feet. There is little profit for us in these figures, but it is a fair return for our expenditure of labor and money in the matter. More than this we would not have, if we could from a sister institution.—Although this number of the METEOR is issued as a Christmas edition, it is dated Dec. 24, because Christmas falls on Sunday. Christmas this year will, therefore, be a festival with a double significance, one pointing to the birth, the other to the resurrection of the God-man.—The deer having been transferred, in the Spring, to the Ladies' Airing-Court, on account of the work to be done on the addition to the West Wing of the Hospital, have become great favorites with the ladies. They are a beautiful sight, "Gibbie," with his majestic horns and airs, "Sylvia," the docile doe, inviting you to pet her, and the lovely fawn just free from the spots of her early months.—We are indebted to Mr. Jno. S. Pierson, who has heretofore been so liberal in supplying us with books, etc., for a large lot of Christmas carols.—We have recently purchased a large lot of woven-wire mattresses. These mattresses have given such satisfaction that they will probably be introduced through the whole establishment.—The opera chairs with which the Rotunda is supplied, are a great improvement on the ordinary chair.