

which ancient body honoured him by electing him their President last year. Several of his papers read before them deserved much wider audience. By his few intimate friends, Mr. Gill was regarded with feelings of more than ordinary admiration, for he possessed an intellect of no common order. The most diverse forms of scientific inquiry successively attracted him, and he did not cease until he had mastered, at least, their principles. Those who knew him well will miss a good friend, from whom much was to be learned, and many a germ for future thought obtained.—*British Medical Journal*.

We may add that Mr. Gill's communications to the work of his own special department were not numerous; but one on Hyoscyamine in the treatment of the insane was much appreciated, and the last number of the Journal contains an interesting record by him of insanity in twins. Ten years ago, when a fresh impetus was given to the investigation of the brain in the insane, Mr. Gill threw himself with ardour into the inquiry, and prepared a large number of microscopic sections, many of which are unsurpassed to the present day.

GEORGE MACKENZIE BACON, M.A., M.D.

The unsparing hand of death has suddenly deprived our specialty of one of its most valued members. Dr. Bacon, the Superintendent of the Cambridgeshire Asylum, succumbed on February 22nd to an attack of peritonitis, complicated with congestion of the lungs and kidneys.

His acute illness lasted only three days, though he had not been in his usual health for several weeks.

Having passed through his medical course at Guy's Hospital, and become a member of the College of Surgeons in 1858, Dr. Bacon joined the Lunacy Branch of the Profession as Assistant Medical Officer of the Norwich County Asylum in 1861.

From thence he was appointed, in 1864, Deputy Superintendent at the Cambridgeshire Asylum at Fulbourn, during the illness of Dr. Lawrence; and he graduated at St. Andrew's, the same year. After two years Dr. Lawrence died and Dr. Bacon succeeded him.

For 15 years he carried on the arduous and trying duties of the asylum without any Assistant, and it was only two years ago that he succeeded in getting an Assistant appointed.

During his period of office Dr. Bacon effected numerous alterations and improvements in his asylum, so that it was made more healthy, commodious, and cheerful, and it will now bear favourable comparison with the majority of English Asylums. The numbers increased under his superintendency from about 200 to 376.

Dr. Bacon was a clever alienist and a shrewd physician. He was also well-read in many scientific subjects, being an antiquary, a numismatist, botanist, and analytical chemist.

He was Secretary to the Cambridge Medical Society, at whose meetings he was a regular attendant and frequent contributor.

His contributions to Psychology and General Medicine were numerous; amongst them may be mentioned "The Handwriting of the Insane," "Crime and Insanity," "Lunacy in Italy," "On Athetosis," "On Epilepsy," and on "General Paralysis," besides many accounts of cases, mental, medical, and surgical.

He for a long time delivered Clinical Lectures at his asylum gratuitously and spontaneously, in acknowledgment of which the University of Cambridge conferred upon him in 1877 the honorary degree of M.A.

His sudden death came as a great shock to all who knew him.

At the asylum, where he spent so many years of his life, and where he was universally admired and esteemed, the blow has been very much felt. His funeral, which took place at Cherryhinton, near his asylum, was very largely

attended by his relatives, many medical friends, and the majority of the asylum staff.

Dr. Bacon was a man of solid ability, and sound judgment; amiable, hospitable, and generous to a fault. He was rather reserved and diffident, and the real amount of his work and his kind actions are known only by a few besides those he befriended and helped.

Dr. Bacon always took a lively interest in the welfare of our Association, and contributed numerous valuable papers to its Journal. He also often rendered assistance in an unobtrusive manner, without his name appearing, by forwarding to the Editors anything he had observed in the public prints which he thought should find a place or be commented on in our pages. In the capacity of one of the Secretaries at the Psychological Section of the British Medical Association, when it met at Cambridge in 1880, Dr. Bacon was untiring in his efforts to make the meeting a success, and read a valuable paper himself which led to a very interesting discussion. He also entertained members of the Section in the most hospitable manner, and placed his time entirely at their disposal.

Correspondence.

To the Editors of THE JOURNAL OF MENTAL SCIENCE.

GENTLEMEN,—My remarks on the subject of "punishment" in the January number of the Journal seem to have given rise to impressions quite different from what was intended by me. In offering an explanation of what I said on this subject, I wish it to be understood that I disclaim all intention of having represented either the views or the practice of Scotch asylum superintendents. While industrial occupation is held to be of paramount importance in the treatment of the insane, the general opinion in Scotland is strongly averse to the employment of coercive measures to induce patients to work. With most cases there is no difficulty experienced, but exceptional cases do sometimes occur where able-bodied and intelligent patients refuse to work, and expend their superfluous energies in stirring up strife and abusing their neighbours. These are the cases in which I recommended some form of punishment, or (to use a less objectionable although synonymous term) coercion, as being calculated to improve their self-control and insure peace and quietness to the other patients. For such purpose I consider hyoscyamine well adapted, for it not only restrains temporarily, but in the case of wilfully vicious patients it has the effect of preventing subsequent outbreaks of excitement. This result I do not attribute to any real medicinal value; the disagreeable physiological effects of the drug are sufficient to explain it, just as a sufficient explanation of the action of assafoetida in hysteria is afforded by its disagreeable, nauseous taste without necessitating any elaborate inquiry into recondite medicinal properties. In the one case patients are *frightened*, and in the other *disgusted*, into exercising their powers of self-control.

These views are the basis on which I have suggested various coercive measures to insure universal industry among patients not unfit for work from either mental or bodily causes. Of course a lunatic asylum is not a place in which such measures can properly be practised, and it is almost needless to say that they are not practised in this or, so far as I am aware, in any other asylum. My suggestions were thrown out as indicating what I consider would be a rational mode of treatment in certain cases, and as pointing to the absence of institutions midway between lunatic asylums and houses of correction, in which the more vicious of lunatics and the more insane of criminals might with advantage be placed.

I am, &c.,

ROBERT W. D. CAMERON, M.D.

Midlothian Asylum,
February, 1883.