

These details have been obtained by careful examination of the books of the establishment in the hands of Mr. Laing, the Governor of the Asylum and Poorhouse, to whom I am indebted for the trouble he has taken in this inquiry, as well as for his co-operation in the management, especially during late years. The results I believe to be creditable to the principle of non-restraint. I was trained in its practice by my late respected master and friend, Dr. Alex. Mackintosh, of Gartnavel Asylum, and I have not yet seen any reason to modify my high appreciation of its wisdom and value. However, we must wait till those who favour the more extended use of restraint tell us their results before determining the question. Meanwhile, any who are in doubt may refrain from arriving at a conclusion.

I may be asked, What are your methods of treatment? I answer, nothing special, simply careful individualization—studying and applying the indications of management and treatment in each case—work, outdoor exercise, careful dieting, amusements, and medicinal treatment. In reference to the last of these, I refuse to admit that when a patient is soothed by medicines fitted to allay the irritability of a brain in a state of disease, I am employing “chemical restraint,” at least in the offensive sense attached to the expression by some, and especially by those who favour mechanical restraint.

I have only further to express my regret that in this communication I have been obliged to name gentlemen whom I count among my personal friends. But all personal considerations must be sunk in view of the importance of the question under consideration. Especially do I regret that I have been constrained to refer particularly to Dr. Yellowlees. It is simply because he initiated and took by far the most important part in the discussion at Edinburgh, and is at present the leader in Scotland of what I believe to be a distinctly retrograde movement. He would do well to remember when advocating the cause of restraint or about to order the application of the “side-arm dresses” or the use of the “protection bed,” that there is a plate on the foundation-stone of Gartnavel Asylum bearing an inscription which declares that the asylum is erected on the principle of “EMPLOYING NO MECHANICAL PERSONAL RESTRAINT IN THE TREATMENT OF THE PATIENTS.”

LAY REVOLT AGAINST MEDIÆVAL ALIENISM.

To the Editors of “THE JOURNAL OF MENTAL SCIENCE.”

SIRS,—In the history of the remarkable movement in which the alienism of the middle ages was swept away, graceful and well-deserved tributes of praise have been bestowed on the labours of Tuke, Pinel, and Esquirol, whose enlightened policy is contrasted—not always with a nice regard to chronology—with the fanaticism of theologians like De Lépine, and the bigotry of the judicial savage who wished that all the witches of Burgundy might be gathered into one place and destroyed.

One chapter only in this strange story remains unwritten—*the lay revolt against mediæval alienism*. Abundant material may be found in the first volume of Calmeil's "De la Folie," in "Le Monde Enchanté," by Balthasar Bekker, and above all in the "Cautio Criminalis, seu de processibus contra sagas" (1694). In this work Spée analyzes with great power, and ever and anon with an epigrammatic indignation worthy of Michelet, the whole judicial machinery of sorcery prosecutions.

I venture respectfully to suggest that in the history of modern alienism a place should be found for such quotations as these—

"Non intercedo justitiæ: non obsisto: nolo ut sint crimina impunita: sed id solum volo quod legifer noster Christus suo ore sancivit, non evellenda esse zizania si periculum sit ne forte cum iis et triticum evellatur" (p. 63).

Dealing with "the speculative theologians" who instigated the prosecutions, he says—

"Quid foris gereatur (*sic*), quis squalor carcerum sit, quod vinculorum pondus, quæ instrumenta torturarum, quæ lamenta pauperum, et similia, nullâ experientiâ didicerunt" (p. 65).

In the following passages Spée dramatises a scene in the torture-chamber; the victim is stretched on the rack, and is at length unconscious of the voice of the priestly questioner—

"Ecce, inquit sacerdos, nunc somno solvitur, ubi alia tractamus: cum id ageretur ut se reum diceret, tunc ad omnes quæstiones obdormiebat. Quid de maleficio dubitabimus? Non poterat eas pœnas nebulo perferre, nisi demon ei sensum sopivisset?" To which he adds, "Praclarum vero facinus ac sacerdotè dignum!" (p. 172).

Again: "Age, stulta mulier et vesana; quid toties vis mori, cum semel possis? Sequere consilium et ante omnem pœnam dic te ream et morere!" (p. 397).

I remain your obedient Servant,

A. WOOD RENTON.

St. George's Club, Hanover Square, W.,
Sept. 11, 1888.

To the Editors of THE JOURNAL OF MENTAL SCIENCE.

District Lunatic Asylum,
Sligo, 4th March, 1889.

GENTLEMEN,—Referring to your comments in the January number of the Journal anent the remarks in my report for the year 1886 as to the stimulants used in this asylum, I beg to direct your attention to the following extract, more particularly the last sentence thereof, taken from the "British Medical Journal" of the 5th January last:—

"ALCOHOL IN BELPER WORKHOUSE.

"There seems to have of recent years been a considerable increase in the amount of alcohol consumed in the Belper Workhouse. The guardians having had their attention called to this, asked the medical officer for an explanation. This request called forth an amusing and spirited defence of the liberal prescription of alcoholic liquor to sick inmates. The medical officer declares that if there had not been this generous administration of intoxicants, the rates would have been reduced in two ways. There would have been a saving to the rates in the direct charge for the liquor used, and there would have been a saving by the premature removal of the poor people to 'that bourne from whence no traveller returns.' 'They would die, and, in the words of the immortal Mr. Scrooge, 'materially reduce the surplus population.'" The medical officer insisted that his position was 'unique in its impregnability.' He gives, as the Hon. F. Strutt remarked at the meeting of the guardians, no statistics. A few cases, however, are narrated in proof of the necessity for alcohol. One case was that of a man brought in insensible from exposure. It does not appear to have