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Cover picture

This is the original drawing by the Scottish painter Alexander Johnston for Plate XXXIX of Sir Alexander Monson’s The Physiognomy of Mental Diseases (1840) which featured portraits of patients with a wide variety of psychiatric symptoms and conditions. Several patients had disorders of movement. Some were immobile and said to exhibit ‘catalepsy’. Catalepsy was defined by British aliens as a condition in which the patient was unable to change the position of a limb, while another person could place the muscles in a state of flexion or contraction. The text accompanying this portrait of A. K., aged 20 yrs, unmarked, reads:

... her disorder ... is attributed to overstudy of religious subjects, respecting which she has imbibed erroneous ideas — she never speaks, and would, if allowed, remain always in one position; her eyes are continually fixed on the ground, her eyelids being half-closed (p. 109).

The original drawings are kept at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, whom we thank for permission to feature this portrait.

We are always looking for interesting and visually appealing images for the cover of the Journal and would welcome suggestions or pictures, which should be sent to Dr Allan Beveridge, British Journal of Psychiatry, 21 Prescot Street, London E1 4BB, UK or bjps@mcgill.ca.