

I have never yet—and I altogether question whether any one else has—seen any substantial object attracted towards the medium otherwise than by material means, of which those I have cited are the principal ones employed.

Sometimes, however, it is alleged that the attraction is upwards, and we have, amongst very many others, men of position and undoubted intelligence, like Dr. Lockhart Robertson and Mr. S. C. Hall, solemnly attesting the reality of such phenomena. In the course of a very simple experiment I conclusively proved, in the presence of many witnesses, how easily the evidence of Mr. Hall's senses could be falsified. I am, therefore, from the liability which this gentleman's senses are to falsification, not inclined to place much reliance on his testimony in matters appertaining to spiritualism. With Dr. Robertson, however, all this may be different, and I should be only too happy to have an opportunity of knowing from himself the phenomena he witnessed, the tests he employed, and of ascertaining whether the explanations I am able to offer do or do not explain everything.

Undoubtedly tables have gone upwards, but never, so far as my experience and that of my friends, who are best calculated to judge of such matters, without material contact.

There are various other points to which I should like to refer, but will, with your permission, postpone them to a future letter.

Yours, &c.,

STUART C. CUMBERLAND.

A PATIENT'S REFLECTIONS ON AN ASYLUM MURDER.

Govan Poorhouse, Glasgow.—Murder.

Royal Asylum, Edinburgh,

May 7th, 1881.

DR. CLOUSTON: DEAR SIR,—With your permission I shall make some observations and reflections upon the above. A murder was committed in the lunatic department of the poorhouse at Govan, in the suburbs of Glasgow, some time about the close of the last and the beginning of the present year, a murder which I venture to characterise as one of the most heinous and aggravated nature.

A poor young man, in a low condition of bodily health, and at the same time suffering from mental disorder assuming the form of acute mania or delirium, was then and there brutally murdered.

From the nature of the affliction under which he laboured the patient was entirely irresponsible for anything he might think, say, or do; indeed, was for the time being in a world of spectres and unrealities, his dearest friends becoming, then, strange to his eyes and objects of suspicion, aversion, or terror. What is the course usually adopted in institutions for the insane in the case of a patient suffering from this species of malady? He is put into a warm bedroom, having its walls and floor padded with a strong but soft elastic material, so that in the paroxysms of the malady, should he fall, he will not be injured, or should he aim a blow at some dread foe of his feverish and morbid imagination, the stroke will fall as harmlessly as that of a snowball when impinged against a wall.

The Lunatic Department at Govan Poorhouse seems to have been possessed of no such indispensable requisite of asylum treatment, and if so, why so? Surely here is a matter requiring the urgent attention of the Lunacy Board. It is not too late, in view of another possible murder there or elsewhere. Where there is such a padded room there is no need for attendants, whose presence in such a case as the one referred to is more likely rather to have a disturbing than a soothing influence on the patient. The operations of the healing Mother

Nature under the presence of acute mental suffering like that referred to are best carried on in darkness and silence, just as in the bowels of the earth the diamond is formed from coal, under a pressure of a force whose strength can hardly be computed, and in which fire, emblematic of suffering, is the chief, if not the only element.

Instead of a padded room, however, the patient was consigned—at least, during the night—to the care of two attendants. No official eye was watching them—only the eye all-seeing of Him who slumbers not nor sleeps, and who takes cognizance of the hidden things of darkness; no sweet friendly voice was there to throw its hallowed infusion into the too sensitive ear of the poor delirious one on what proved to be his bed of death, but the rough, coarse, and often blasphemous expressions of ignorant hinds; no kind hand to soothe the burning, fevered brow, but one ready to smite with a blow, to twist, to tear; no knee on which to rest the anguished head, but one to crush and bruise without leaving any outward mark; no warm heart gently leaning in prayerful affection on the weary breast, but the whole weight of the bodies of these most inhumane attendants falling upon him to injure him beyond the possibility of recovery.

What a blessed release when the sufferer was discharged, not from the asylum, as he might and ought to have been, cured of his merely temporary malady, but from a world where men with natures depraved beyond conception so greatly abound.

The case was tried at the Circuit Court, Glasgow, the Lord Justice Clerk Moncreiff being judge. A witness for the prosecution, who had been insane, testified, in language clear and precise, as to what he had seen or heard with reference to the murder, and the judge remarked with regard to this witness, and as if deprecating his testimony, that it was the first case within his experience as a practitioner at the bar and judge on the bench where the evidence of one who had been a lunatic was employed. I may be allowed to refresh the memory of the too forgetful judge, and to say that in the case of "*The Crown versus Wormald*," a trial which took place in the Court of Justiciary, Edinburgh, not quite four years ago, the Lord Justice General Inglis presiding, a Mr. Andrew Donaldson, who had been a lunatic, was a witness; and also in a case tried before Sheriff Campion, only a few weeks ago, a person who was at the time—not merely had been—a lunatic was examined, and on his testimony the accused was found guilty and fined. To this Sheriff belongs the honour, so far as I am aware, of condemning a man on the testimony of a lunatic, and chiefly, if not altogether, on his testimony alone. For this step in the right direction he is deserving of the warmest thanks of all the virtuous and thoughtful portion of the community who are inmates of asylums. Vulgar prejudices are gradually dying out, and will at last become extinct. Comparatively few of the insane are so far gone, even when at their worst, that some ray of reason does not break forth from their darkened mind, while by far the largest proportion know right from wrong and good from evil, and are as well, if not better, qualified than ordinary people, from the very regulating, tempering, and sharpening of their mental and moral powers, caused by the heat of the fire of affliction which they have passed through, to judge in any given circumstances, and to give the naked, unbiassed truth when called on as witnesses.

David Kinnear, head attendant, said of the witness above mentioned that he did not give his story—story is the word employed by vulgar and even by cultured prejudice to designate any statement of facts made by a lunatic—till his discharge from the lunatic wards. This shows he was not devoid of caution, though courage was lacking. Had he, when under the supervision of the officials of the Lunatic Department, divulged what he saw or heard, he would most probably, if not certainly, have been made to suffer in person and in board.

With regard to Mr. Guthrie Smith, counsel for the prisoners, he, too, like his chief, seemed to be ignorant of the case of "*The Crown v. Wormald*" and of Sheriff Campion's proceedings, and too much assured of the strength of the case to act upon the wise saying, "leave no stone unturned." He did not bring forward a witness for the defence, on the ground of his insanity. If the testimony he declined was worth hearing in the course of precognition, it was worth

stating, and it would have been judged on its merits. This witness was very likely a lickapittle of the murderers. He was probably of a low mental type, one whose sense of right and wrong was confused, and his view of the turpitude of certain actions by no means clear and well defined. In a word, he was most likely one of the easy-going, harmless class who has never been subjected to harsh treatment, since it has been his lot, perhaps, to do nothing to rouse the ire and bring himself under the oppression or remorseless attacks of those in power.

The Lord Justice Clerk commended Mr. Guthrie Smith as one who had acted wisely. We might ask if it is wise to leave a witness out of account, though insane, especially one said to be for the defence. Sheriff Campion's view of wisdom in this connection is antipodal to Lord Moncreiff's, and if one is right the other must be wrong.

It was said in defence that the attendants did not intend to kill the patient. It is a matter of less moment to know what they intended than what they did. They killed him inch by inch by breaking rib after rib of his body till twelve ribs were broken. Twelve "bony" witnesses these, that speak with no dubiety as to their intentions. It was not an iron image of a man they were operating upon, but one of flesh and blood like themselves, and to say that they did not intend murdering the patient—at least, that they had any particular concern whether they did so or not—is contrary to reason and common sense.

The jury came to the decision that the attendants were guilty of a gross assault, and recommended one of the two to the leniency of the Court. The Judge, in passing sentence, seemed to have left this recommendation of the jury entirely out of account, and sentenced each of them to three months' imprisonment. Thirteen weeks had been passed by them in prison previous to the trial.

In asylums no two attendants are on an exact equality, and in this murder the principal of the two, as the mainspring of the proceedings, must have been the more guilty of the two.

Next to the loss of character there is, perhaps, no evil that can overtake a man so great as insanity, for, independent of the suffering it brings along with it, the stigma of being, or having been insane is not very easily borne.

The City of Glasgow Bank Directors—men who certainly not willingly, but by the force of an overpowering tide of circumstances, were led to commit reprehensible actions in finance—were sentenced, several of them to eight months and two of them to eighteen months' imprisonment, while men appointed and paid for taking care of a poor lunatic, and who, by their most unjustifiable and cruel treatment, cause his death, are sentenced to three months' imprisonment only. This certainly does not look like even-handed justice. Mercy is the noblest attribute of the Almighty, and judgment mingled with mercy is the principle on which men should act in dispensing justice to their fellow men; yet, as there is hardly a day in which harshness and over-severity in one form or another are not practised in asylums for the insane, it seems to us that these things will rather be increased than diminished by a judgment like that of the Lord Justice Clerk in cases such as this which at present has been brought under our notice.

I am, dear Sir,
Yours obediently,
J. T.

MISLEADING EXAMPLE IN THE CENSUS SCHEDULES.

The following has appeared in *The Scotsman*:—

“ Stirling, April 2, 1881.

“ SIR—It is much to be regretted that in the directions for filling in the census paper one of the examples given on the back of the schedule will lead people to make returns which must lessen the value of the results. Householders are asked to state if any member of their family be deaf or dumb, blind, an imbecile