THE INSANE.

The Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane.

(From the N. Y. Tribune.)

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 19.—During the past year, several accounts have been published regarding insane asylums, which conveyed the idea that a man who is in his right mind, or who is only eccentric, may be committed to a lunatic asylum and confined for an indefinite period, and for the alleged reason that his relatives may get possession of his property. Several cases before the Philadelphia courts have called public attention to the treatment of patients in the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane, and I came hither and made a thorough inspection of this institution.

This hospital was founded in 1751, and among the originators was Benjamin Franklin. The original building was left for the use of the city as a hospital, in which the sick and those insane from poverty were cared for, making it correspond in almost every respect with the New York Hospital, on Broad way. This hospital has been in high repute, and its influence upon the medical knowledge of the country has been marked. The Hospital for the Insane has also had a high reputation, for it was the first institution of the kind established in this country, and it was also the first to lead the way in new methods for treating the insane, which not only here but in many other institutions have been the prior to any known before, that now the whole insane population, on an average, about eighty cases in a hundred.

This hospital is not a State institution, for it is a corporate body, and is managed by the influence of the citizens of Philadelphia. The control is in a board of managers, elected by the contributors, and this board appoints a visiting committee, with the duty to inspect the hospital once every week, which duty has not been neglected in a single instance. So well-informed people have been in the city and the Legislature of the State with the management hitherto, that the regulations adopted in 1751 are unchanged, and their legality has become established by virtue of the common law; so that they can make assessments of any kind. Large sums have been given and bequeathed by wealthy citizens, and so great has been the public confidence, that one gentleman, who had never been insane, gave $25,000 for the improvement of the condition of the insane. For 78 years Dr. Kirkbride has filled the responsible position of physician and of general manager to the institution, and the still retains the confidence of the citizens and of the board of managers.

In 1859 the people of Philadelphia contributed funds for a new building to be occupied exclusively by men. It has a main front of 312 feet, with two wings, one 167 feet, and three stories high, while other extensive buildings are either attached or adjacent. There are also out-door houses, sheds and other structures. Nor is the building for women less complete or extensive. Each is constructed on a massive stone wall, including a space in the former of 50 acres, and in the latter of 41; acres, containing walks, which are made up to two miles long, brick pavements 6,000 feet long, shade trees, ornamental trees and gardens, thus making the most complete and costly establishment in our country. Still, there are other and very important objects of general disregard of the objects for which the institution was founded.

I arrived at the hospital in the afternoon, entered a gate kept by a porter, then, passing a short distance in an avenue of evergreens, came to the main door, which opened into a long carpeted hall, and passing to the left hand side of the hall, I reached the office, where I stated my business. At once, every opportunity for a thorough inspection was given me.

One entering a lunatic asylum for the first time can expect to see sad and horrible sights, and will unlikely will fear to be suddenly assailed by some raving maniac. For our excitement, we have been fed up to date either from English literature or from pictures of the inmates of Bedlam, with sunken cheeks and ghastly eyes, while their emaciated chairs and delusive themselves mad; or, from there sad sights in some far-off country side, and in the days before asylums had been erected and endowed, where the insane were confined in the county jail or poor house, or were provided for by their friends at home. Many will remember instances of those days, in some rural region, a small hovel near the farmhouse for the confinement of an insane member of the household; or, a daughter, a father, or a wife and mother. This hovel was perhaps only a few square, offensive built of logs that it might be strong, without a window, perhaps without a door, but with an entrance through the roof, and there could be no fire, as the inmate was worse than an animal, and if one looked in the captive would be seen crouching upon a bed of straw, or chained in a corner, glaring with rage, or shrinking in fear, while the garments hung in tags, if any rags remained. The father, mother and four grown sons, tall and strong; another son, the first born, was confined in a log house in a meadow by a brook. This was a rule, once in two weeks on Sunday morning, for the family to go to this house in strong door, when, armed with clubs they would all rush in, grapple with the maniac, and tie him with a rope. Then they would wash him, put on clean garments, clean out the hovel, and leave him for two weeks more. Thus the poor wretch lived, never improving, always fierce, or said so to be, and it was thought best, almost dying. She had attempted to starve herself; then, repenting, was anxious to live, but it was doubtful whether she could not too late. All the doors, as we passed, were open, but we came to one which was closed. The keeper knock it open with a key, and a young lady stood wringing her hands and crying piteously. "Well, how are you to-day?" we have been sick." Answer, "Yes, I have been very bad, but I feel better now, and I hope I shall be more quiet soon to-morrow." She was soothed by the kindest words and the gentlest hands. Her case was this: She was cured and was cured restored to her friends, living in a far country, but she had come again.

"Now, this asylum is divided into 16 wards, entirely separated from each other, the inmates of which form families numbering about 15, for whom a table is set and food specially prepared. The cooking is done on one establishment, as is also the washing and ironing, and that which is required for a particular ward is transported by a railway in the basement and received in the proper place upon an elevator. The wards are separated by halls and locked doors, and to most of the wards belong spacious yards planted with trees and flowers, and surrounded by walls. In each of these 16 wards, all of which are occupied by females, is a piano, also a library, while there are interesting specimens in glass cases, and everywhere are engravings which represent domestic and cheerful scenes. In short, everything is calculated to produce neatness, order and agreeable impressions. The patients in one ward have no connection with those of another, and generally each is as isolated as if it were the only one in the building. The object is to place those of like condition together. To associate the timorous and weak with the boisterous and strong would make both miserable; for one would shrink with fear, the other would become audacious. This arrangement corresponds to classification in the sciences; the advantages are as great in one case as in another, and without it little or no progress could be made. Another advantage arises from the assistance derived from such patients as are in process of recovery, for it is found that they at once use their newly recovered faculties in helping those in condition, since they sympathize with them and know their wants even better than their attendants and yet, those recovones may be far from being restored, and they still need assistance from the physician or those still more advanced. After they have reached a certain stage in their recovery they are removed to a ward where the condition they are in is more analogous to their own. There is much in this similar to the Lancasterian system of education. There are several aged women in this institution, and some have grown old in it, having been here from 10 to 40 years. It is impossible that in such had at first been treated by the present methods they would have been cured, but nothing is better ascertained than that the earlier proper treatment can commence the more certainly is there a speedy and permanent cure—that is, unless the cases are attended with organic disease.

In one ward was a most cheerful sight. A lady, perhaps 50 years old, sharp-featured, active and dressed in blue and black, danced, was playing the Devil's Dream on the piano, while two ladies, not far from 50 years old, danced a reel, and they were as loving and gay as any young couple dancing in a country tavern. One, seeming to have an important communication, came to the Doctor and told him that she was wanted to leave she would let him know. One was the wife of an eminent man; one the sister of another, the names of which were whispered. As we passed along, one, well-dressed and seeming every way proper, gave to some of us a wink.

In the various wards all grades are included, and they range from the elegant and cultured lady who goes with an attendant in a carriage to the city, to make purchases—being considered safe to be entrusted with a pledging—down to those who sit silent, and who seem neither to see nor hear—wild hair, and paralytic twitches, and in whom reason seems like a flame that flickers in the act of expiring. The view is a sad one, and leading from brilliancy down to imbecility. In one is beheld some deficiency; in the next another deficiency is superadded; in the next still another, until, at last, all that makes woman attractive and loved is gone, or, what is worse, so little is left that the condition is as if the sun were blotted from the heavens, and chaos had come again. The last state is called dementia, and it differs from idiocy only in having a beginning. The idiot, forgetful, there are always hopes; they are more or less active; they receive impressions, their conduct is mainly exemplary, they understand some things clearly, and more than three-fourths of the inmates are restored to their right mind.

Every means for affording rational amusement is supplied; there is a gymnasium, also a lecture room, where lectures by gentlemen are delivered, mainly on some popular topic, or on the Natural Sciences, and exhibitions are held with the magic-lantern and various optical and chemical instruments; several companies are kept for patients in short, whatever art, science, industry, or amusement demonstrates to be best adapted to the mind to its former condition is liberally and industriously applied. I was shown every room, even the closet where were thrown open; and, besides, I followed along the highways of the vast basement up to the attic and dome.

Those persons who go by the general name of insane persons are said here to be in a state of excitement, and when they become wholly unmanageable they are placed in rooms containing only a mattress laid on the floor. These rooms correspond to the grated dungeons of Bedlam, where chains are fixed to the walls. There is a narrow window so high that it cannot be reached, and there is a transom window over the door. If they contained a bed and a little furniture, they would be similar to many of the rooms in a good New York hotel. Patients of this class will readily commit suicide if they can, and in they are ingenious in seeking the means. The usual preventive is a garment which has sleeves joined together at the wrist, entirely closing both hands. As the patient recovers, a bedstead is brought in, or there is a removal to a furnished room, and finally to the society of one of the wards. This extreme condition is of short duration; often it is interrmittent, and as none among more than 200 were so confined on the day of my visit, or seemed in any respect requiring it, the improvement in the treatment of the insane over former methods must be manifest. As for dungeons, chains, or any means for punishment, I saw nothing of the kind. When a patient becomes highly excited, we are attendants of the ward come on each side, and each taking an arm a transfer to a room is decorously, gently, and quietly made. One of the rules is, that an attendant must speak only in a low unimpassioned voice; often it is found unnecessary to speak at all, even where the manifestations of the common eye would appear of the most alarming character. During the night, watchmen pass through the halls at stated periods, while their passage is marked upon a card, within the case of an ingeniously constructed clock. The clothes of each inmate are kept in a place allotted to the hall.

In the evening I attended a tea-party—for one was given to the patients every week—that is, to a portion at a time, and they looked forward to the occasion with great interest. All the officers, with their ladies, were present, and, notwithstanding this was a class much nearer to their others, with regard to the progress of their cure, I had never mingled in a company where all were more proprietary in manner. I have sat at festive tables where the company might be taught something by the behavior of some unfortunate guest. The dishes were removed several games were introduced, in which most of the patients took an active interest, and conversation was intermingled. Still, there were those whom nothing could arouse, and they sat in listless and downcast. On this occasion was present a lady with a history of the most interesting and affecting nature, but it cannot be told with propriety. Her husband which holds this pen shall be modering in the tale. Her two oldest blossoms engaged her through every period of her existence. On the next evening she was a lecture; on the next, some other entertainment, and she was a part of the work goes on through the year.

The hospital building for men is nearly half a mile distant. Between are the two walls of the respective institutions; and also a road, which, if it were not for making, as it were, a gulf which cannot be passed." Upon a little reflection, the necessity for separating the sexes will be obvious, but it would be a sufficient reason in the fact that many ladies would not enter if they would be where they meet men who in after life could lay claim to an acquaintance formed in such a place. The general plan, the interior arrangements and provision for comfort, instruction, amusement and cure are the same as in the department for females. The number of males is, from year to year, about the same as of females, which shows, notwithstanding complainings in certain quarters in regard to women, that both are happy and contented in a equal degree.

Surely, if anywhere, some of the scenes of Bedlam would be presented among the men. The door was opened. It was neither an iron nor a massive door, nor did it differ from the parlor door in one's own dwelling. Here was a spacious well-lighted and cheerful hall, with pictures on the walls, with theories, cases of insects, and various curiosities, but the inmates were strikingly indicative, in entrance awakened activity and curiosity; all eyes turned toward us, and there was a general movement on the part of each to secure a position favorable for seeing or hearing. A large insane like was hunted up to us with confidence, holding in his hand a petition addressed to the President of the United States, praying for an appointment to the office of Secretary of State, or of War, or of the Treasury, or of the Navy, or of Minister to Ambassador to England, France, or Russia; or, in case none of these places should be vacant, the Superintendency of the United States Mint would be accepted. We did not hesitate to sign his petition, because we could not conceive that the public service would receive a new injury even should he be appointed. The next applicant was a man who had 320 poems, which he wished to sell, one of which contained 1,000 lines, and all were superior to any poetry published or published. It this was the only evidence of his insanity, the reason for his detention did not seem apparent, because such men are far from being uncommon. Next we were introduced to a gentleman standing in his door, and he politely invited us to enter. On a table was a large collection of standard poetry, Shakespeare having a prominent place, and he told us that he was devoting every moment of his time in making himself perfect in the English classics, and in particular with Shakespeare. "These investigations," said he, "develop the interior faculties far more than any secondary basis, whether attached to a higher or a lower plane, and the laying down of a formula deduced therefrom is excelled only by the Divine Being and by the angels of heaven, when compared with the concrete of a higher life." Next was a small, well-dressed young man, who had something of an Hogarth air in his manner, and when I asked him how he was, and how he liked the asylum, he said: "Institution is fair, you know, and the grub's good, but the trouble is, you know, there's nobody here, that is to say, out of the whole, there is nobody fit for society, you know, to converse with, you know, that is, no more than two, if so many, and all the rest are simply nobodies."

Going into another ward, the first person introduced was the President of the United States. He looked as though he lived well, and he offered me several offices, and in particular to be Minister to Holland, but, at the request of his wife, I left the office vacant. He wanted others to take offices, and after considerable begging they were all filled. I succeeded to the last of that other gentleman who wanted offices so badly could have had an interview with this President, a great deal of trouble would be saved; in fact, there is abundant material there for organizing a complete government, and he might learn money and then steal it, and traitors and secession and actual cures. The President, being a musician, went to the piano, and played a song on the bad effects arising from drinking cocktails on Sunday morning. During the performance a poor creature came in with vacant stare, and he continued to make him turn around, but he was as rigid as so much India rubber; finally they forced him into a corner, and he not a word spoken. Thence we went to a large room, where several old men sat around the wall, as if at meeting, while the winter sun shone upon them brightly, and they were as stupid as if dragged with opium. They had reached the lowest stage. For a reason that need not be stated we hastened away. In the hall was one who, long ago, was an officer in the regular army, and it was said that if he had not resigned he would have out-ranked General Scott. He wanted only one thing, and that was a chew of tobacco. Another wanted a work, which was given him, and it was stated that he had laid up quite a fund, but sometimes he invents something in candy. Another had been a lawyer; he understood his condition, and he stated it. He had worked his brain when it was already overworked, and still he had worked it, taking neither sleep nor relaxation, and now all was gone. In saying this he shed tears. As we approached the end of the hall two remarkably intellectual-looking young men, with dark shadows around their eyes, stepped towards us quickly and lightly, and they seemed as ready to make a spring as if they were tigers. And yet, neither thought of it, and others are feared by the attendants. Generally, an insane man is a coward, and he will shrink before the steady gaze of a determined man in his right mind. One had a little wheel on a small staff. "What is this for?" "To turn around." "But what is the object?" "To turn around." "Yes, yes; what kind of machinery is it for to turn around?"

Then we were taken into what have been called the dungeons. They were simply bare rooms with two windows, and as described in the former visit. The walls in some were defaced, and one room was in process of repair, having been set on fire by a patient, whose friends were certainly free from all matches. We were shown what is called a "wading," which was made for a patient who from doing himself bodily injury. It is composed of straps and webbing, about two inches in width, and is fastened to the bedstead, it confines the limbs and the body, and is so arranged that the patient can move his limbs or lie in any position, but he can neither arise nor throw off the bed-clothes. It is ingenious; and it was decided to have several many lives, particularly for the reason that when the patient finds he cannot get away, his muscles finally relax and he sleeps. None of the stupefying gases are used, because they produce a violent reaction.

Having gone through the whole building, we went into the department, regardless of the use for which it was applied, and making in the whole extent a walk of a mile and a quarter. I was not the only one astonished at the vast sum of money expended in the progress of their cure, I had never mingled in a company where all were restored, yet, indeed,