

laugh ; a good deal of thick yellow sputa. Respiratory sounds weak, especially on right side ; no marked dulness.

Patient was very melancholic ; she refused her food, was very dull and quiet ; obstinate, and talked incoherently. This condition lasted until March 23rd, when she took some food, having been fed with the stomach pump until this date.

On taking her food her bodily health at once improved, but mentally she continued very melancholic, discontented, and dull in manner.

She had the delusion which persisted that the Medical Superintendent was her father.

She remained in this condition until May, when she was persuaded to employ herself by sewing.

She improved ; but in April, 1878, relapsed into her former condition ; she refused to work ; spoke in a feeble and plaintive manner, and was incoherent. During this time she took her food, and was in fair health bodily.

She remained a quiet, melancholic, weak-minded patient until January, 1883, when she was induced to occupy herself again, and her mental condition at once improved.

The improvement continued uninterruptedly, and she was discharged in February, 1884.

Besides these cases I find notes of fourteen others, in a period of thirteen years alone, in which recovery took place after three years of treatment in this asylum, viz. :—One male over eight years, one over five, two over three, one female over seven years, two over five years, three over four years, and four over three years.

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*Confessions of a Young Lady Laudanum-Drinker. Dose, Four Ounces Daily, in Two-ounce Doses.*

The following letter addressed to a distinguished member of the Association has been placed in our hands, and we think that we shall be doing good service by printing it in the Journal. The writer's mother brought her to Dr. —, and consulted him as to what course he would advise in her case. He counselled immediate and absolute stoppage of laudanum and residence for a time in an asylum, where alone perfect surveillance could be secured. After leaving him and thinking over his advice, she was unable to bring herself to adopt it. She decided, however, to leave home with her daughter and devote herself entirely to her recovery, never leaving her, and preventing her obtaining any opium.

The result is told in the patient's graphic narrative. She has now been well for more than a year.—[Eds. J. M. S.]—

DEAR SIR, —

Perhaps you may remember a lady calling on you with her daughter about the middle of August, to ask you if there was any way of curing the habit of taking opium, which the girl had contracted. I, who write, am that same girl, and think you may perhaps be interested to hear how I got on. It is hateful to me to think of that horrible time, and one of my chief reasons for writing to you is to beg you to try and make known, by every means in your power, what a terrible thing opium-eating is. If people only knew of the consequences sure to follow on such a habit, of its insidiousness, and the difficulty of leaving it off, surely they would never touch it. Perhaps it is rather soon for me to imagine myself cured, but I do not think I can ever feel more horrified about it than I do now. There was no excuse for me taking it, brought up by such a mother, and with such a constant example of unselfishness before me in the rest of the family. All my tastes and fancies were gratified; as mother says, when I take a whim into my head, the whole house is turned upside down. When I came home from school I insisted on practising seven hours a day, and the family put up with it, though it was a great infliction to them. It would have been better for me had they not done so, for I was naturally so tired-out at night that I could not sleep, and, knowing that sleep would come easily with a little laudanum, it was difficult to resist taking it. Of course, it didn't become habitual all at once; the first time I got it was at school, after a concert, when its effects were so soothing, that it became quite usual for me to get it, mixed up with quinine, which I was forced to take, though there was not the slightest necessity for it, as nobody could be stronger than I am. Thank goodness, we have all inherited splendid constitutions, and would almost think it a disgrace to the family to have anything the matter with us. I'm quite sure I would never have had neuralgia, if it had not been for stewing up for exams. Mother was always writing to tell me not to do them, but I did not feel it my duty to obey her on that point, as what does one go to school for if not to learn; and to own one's self beaten by a headache would surely show a very weak mind. I'm just mad at myself for having given in to such a fearful habit as opium-eating. None but those who have as completely succumbed to it as I did, could guess the mischief it would do. Even you, with an experience which must be extremely varied, being as you are, in such a good place for studying people's brains, (or rather their want of them) cannot know the amount of harm it did to me morally, though I must say you did seem to have a pretty fair idea of it. It got me into such a state of indifference, that I no longer took the least interest in anything, and did nothing all day but loll on the sofa reading novels, falling

asleep every now and then, and drinking tea. Occasionally I would take a walk or drive, but not often. Even my music I no longer took much interest in, and would play only when the mood seized me, but felt it too much of a bother to practise. I would get up about ten in the morning, and make a pretence of sewing; a pretty pretence, it took me four months to knit a stocking. Worse than all, I got so deceitful, that no one could tell when I was speaking the truth. It was only this last year it was discovered; those living in the house with you are not so apt to notice things, and it was my married sisters who first began to wonder what had come over me. They said I always seemed to be in a half dazed state, and not to know what I was doing. However they all put it down to music. Mother had let me go to all the *Orchestral Concerts* in the winter, and they thought it had been too much for me. By that time it was a matter of supreme indifference to me what they thought, and even when it was found out, I had become so callous that I didn't feel the least shame. Even mother's grief did not affect me, I only felt irritated at her; this is an awful confession to have to make, but it is better to tell the whole truth when you once begin, and it might be some guide to you in dealing with others. If you know of anyone indulging in such a habit, especially girls, just tell them what they will come to. Of course its effects differ according to one's nature, and it's to be hoped few get so morally degraded as I did. This much is certain, few would have the constitution to stand it as I did, and even I was beginning to be the worse for it. For one thing, my memory was getting dreadful; often, in talking to people I knew intimately, I would forget their names, and make other absurd mistakes of a similar kind. As my elder sister was from home, I took a turn of being housekeeper. Mother thinks every girl should know how to manage a house, and she lets each of us do it in our own way, without interfering. Her patience was sorely tried with my way of doing it, as you may imagine, I was constantly losing the keys, or forgetting where I had left them, I forgot to put sugar in puddings, left things to burn, and a hundred other things of the same kind.

No one need think they will escape without punishment in some form or other. Unfortunately those who are strong can go on for a long time with impunity. But sooner or later retribution is sure to follow, and as I don't believe anyone's friends would put up with them as mine did with me, there would be nothing for it but to either voluntarily go where you suggested I should, or, if their reason was gone (which you also politely suggested with regard to me) they would be sent. I must say you have a pretty plain way of putting things. It is rather startling to a young lady to be told that she'll have to pay a six months' visit to a lunatic asylum, even when such varied attractions as "needlework, drawing and walking," are held out. However, perhaps the thought of living in such a palatial residence might reconcile some people to it. All

the same, it would be a pity to make the place too comfortable, people might miss it when they got out. Those chairs in your "question-room" were especially comfortable; the charm of the conversation that goes on is sustaining enough without that, and I do hope others have not the same difficulty in tearing themselves away that I had. Well, I didn't mean to go on like that, but my mood has changed very often since I began this letter, and I've made up my mind to put down just what I feel. Some of the horrid things you said are running in my mind, though I was so indifferent at the time, you might have said a good deal more without making any impression on me; even when you spoke about breaking mother's heart I didn't care. But I do now, and think you needn't have said some of the things to mother that you did when I was out of the room. Mother says doctors have a right to say everything, and I suppose people in your profession get hardened. There's just one thing I would like to know, and that is—whether you could tell that I had not left off laudanum that day we called. Surely you must know the state one gets into when suddenly deprived of it; they could no more sit up and speak as I did than fly. By that time I had brought myself down to a quarter of an ounce a day, and as you had put mother on her guard, I had no means of getting any more, (I hate having to own that I tried to do so) so the day after we saw you was the last I had any. Then began a time I shudder to look back upon, I don't like owning to bodily suffering, but will not deny that I suffered then. I wonder if leaving off opium has the same effect on everyone! My principal feeling was one of awful weariness and numbness at the end of my back; it kept me tossing about all day and night long. It was impossible to lie in one position for more than a minute, and of course sleep was out of the question. I was so irritable that no one cared to come near me; mother slept on the sofa in my room, and I nearly kicked her once for suggesting that I should say hymns over to myself, to try and make me go to sleep. Hymns of a very different sort were in my mind, I was once or twice very nearly strangling myself, and I am ashamed to say that the only thing that kept me from doing so was the thought that I would be able to get laudanum somehow. Oh, I did feel miserable! Poor mother had a hard time of it, she said she never had such a heart-rending time in all her life; any time any of us were ill before there was always some remedy, but this time there was none, there was nothing for it but to bear it. Two or three times she was sorely tempted to give it to me, she got afraid I was going to have brain-fever, or something of the sort with so much tossing-about, and no sleep. I used to get up in the morning and try to go about, but never got further than the sofa, where the same thing was repeated, tossing and moving about. As for sitting-up that was out of the question; eating was equally so, but I was well deluged with beef-tea and coffee, so much so, that I can never touch the latter, the very smell of it makes me quite sick, it

brings back so vividly that hateful time. After a little more than a week of that I got better, and was able to lie quieter; but that stage was about as bad as the other. I was conscious of feeling nothing but the mere sense of being alive, and if the house had been burning, would have thought it too much of an effort to rise. I tried reading, but found that the sense of the words was a trouble to take in. However, that didn't last for many days, and the next feeling was one of longing to get away somewhere or anywhere, even a lunatic asylum, anything for a change. We went to — for a few weeks, and hadn't been there three days before I began to get so hungry, there was no satisfying me. I used to eat all day long, but never once felt satisfied. This is rather an unromantic confession for a young lady to make, but I suppose it was natural after eating so little for a fortnight. In spite of that my back still continued to trouble me; walking for more than a quarter of an hour at a time was very fatiguing, and I considered myself well-off with four hours of sleep. (Perhaps you think I did very well with that, but our family is one which requires a great deal of sleep; when the children have holidays their one thought seems to be how much sleep they can get, sleeping round the clock being a common thing to them, though they are all active and noisy enough when up.) However, I gradually got over that, and now am perfectly well, with the exception of my back, which has that nasty aching feeling now and then. Our medical man, who is a bright specimen of the country doctor, said "it might be anything," and when asked to explain what that meant said "perhaps her corsets are too tight." This was indeed a bright idea as I don't happen to wear corsets at all. Those country doctors are fit for nothing but measles and teething. What I think so very queer when I was taking laudanum is that though my memory was going for other things, it was as good as ever for music; I could pick up by ear and play off even better than before. I often think had that faculty gone it would have alarmed me so much that perhaps I would have been able to stop my evil habits, but it's unlikely. Oh, dear, surely I shall never touch opium again! Besides the remembrance of what I endured in giving it up, there is my gratitude to all the family, especially my dear mother, for their extreme kindness to me when little better than a brute. Here I must state that I think you are right about a lunatic asylum being the only place for one to be cured of opium-eating. In my own case I can truly state that I could easily have procured it loads of times if I had wished, for though mother watched me very strictly at first, she soon relaxed, and if I had not by that time possessed the wish to be cured, I should probably be as bad as ever now. However, my parents very firmly told me that this was my last chance, that they would not stand any more of it, and that had it been any of the others they would have been sent away at once, but as they considered themselves to blame in having over-indulged me, they were willing to give me another trial, and try what a

different system would do. This different system began by being very strict; only two hours a day practising, no French novels, tea only three times a day, and not to be allowed out at night this winter. As to the other arrangements, they also soon fell through; after having let a girl have pretty much her own way for nearly twenty-two years, it is rather too much to expect her to give up all at once so much that she has been accustomed to. However, I tried my best to meet their wishes, with this result that they now trust me fully, and as a proof of this they have allowed me to come into — to a dance and I fancy I hear you saying “it may be kindness, but it’s mistaken kindness.” You will also say I am not yet in a fit state to resist temptation. That may be true, but I only know I would consider myself worse than the lowest brute were I to take advantage of their kindness. What mother has done for me is incredible; I don’t believe there’s a woman like her in the world. How she can have a daughter like myself I can’t understand. To think that for over three years I have gone on deceiving such a mother; if I were of a morbid nature I should die of remorse. Oh, why do you doctors not try prevention as well as cure? You have it in your power to warn those who take laudanum now and then for toothache or a headache, what an insidious thing it is, and how easily they may become the victims of it. I began that way, and see what it came to. Even now I often wonder if I’ve quite got over its effects. Does anyone who has gone up to three or four ounces a day, and is suddenly deprived of it, live to tell the tale? I can hardly believe it. My own sufferings were bad enough, and I had got down to a quarter of an ounce. I’ll end this by alluding again to the object of my writing, namely, the prevention of people getting into such a state as I was: if they were to know the state of moral idiocy to which they would in the end be brought, would they ever allow themselves to once begin the habit? They need not say to themselves “Oh, we can stop it when we like;” opium takes away their power to do that. There can’t be a more determined person than I am naturally, and what good did that do me! I determined a hundred times to stop it, but never succeeded, and at last I got that I didn’t care a rap what became of me, all the reasoning and affection expended on me, being a mere waste of time and love. You doctors know all the harm those drugs do, as well as the “victims” of them, and yet you do precious little to prevent it. If that subject were to be taken up instead of some so often spoken of in the health-lectures which are now given, it might do some practical good. Well, I wonder at myself being able to write such a long letter on a subject which is so repugnant to me that I try never even to think of it. I can hardly finish up in my usual style which is “hoping to see you soon again;” because I certainly don’t hope so, and if I ever do have the pleasure of seeing you again, let us hope it will be under very different circumstances.