

The advantages of independent inspection of lunatic asylums by authorities who are not concerned in their management are so obvious, its necessity so palpable, that we cannot conceive any real argument against it; and we heartily concur with Dr. Wilbur in his wish to establish systematic government supervision, while leaving to him the entire responsibility for his indictment of the management of American asylums.

In the main hall of the asylum at Washington stands an electric clock, which Dr. Nichols is fond of showing to visitors. By ingenious devices of mechanism, it registers on a sheet of paper, for the information of the officers, the precise movements of the night watchman as he makes his periodical rounds through the wards, thus securing his fidelity.

On its face Dr. N. has placed the old Latin motto, "*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*"—who shall keep the very keepers? Would it not be well to emblazon this same motto on the door-posts of this and all other American asylums? Is it not wise for the state governments to act upon the principle thus quaintly stated, and establish a proper supervision of the very care-takers of all confined in such institutions?

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*A Priestly Exorcist.*

The "Times" of November 2nd contains the following report from its Barcelona correspondent, who wrote under date October 21st:—

"I will briefly describe what has just happened in this wealthy city. About the 14th or 15th of this present month of October it was privately announced, chiefly to the faithful women of the congregation which regularly throngs the Church of the Holy Spirit in the street of San Francisco, that a young woman of 17 or 18 years of age of the lower class, having long been afflicted with 'a hatred of holy things'—the poor girl probably was subject to epileptic fits, and cried out became convulsed when she heard the noise of the organ in church—the senior priest of the church above mentioned would cure her of her disease, or, to use that gentleman's own language, 'Avaunt,

22nd the Association of Superintendents of Insane Asylums were making a visit to the Utica institution, and some of them, with Dr. Bucknill, remained over the 24th. Out of deference to the visitors, perhaps, an unusual effort was made to get the patients out. Nevertheless, in spite of this note, the fact is patent to all who have had the opportunity of comparing the customs of American with British institutions, that the former are much less in the open air than the latter. In Great Britain they not only get the patients out of doors, but keep them out.

physicians and mountebanks ; see how the Church will cure this poor girl, who is at present possessed with 400 devils.'

"Those who are acquainted with Barcelona know well the Calle San Francisco, one of the well-to-do streets of the city, and its church, Espiritu Santo, not a poor man's, but a fashionable church. For eight days, the last day being the 17th inst., a little stream of persons of all ranks and of either sex might have been seen at the unusual hour (for church-going) of 12 a.m. threading its way towards the church. The principal door was kept closely shut, but the faithful or credulous, the open scoffer, and the lover of signs and wonders found admittance by a side door to the exhibition which I am about to describe. The church was dark, but a sickly light was shed by wax lights on the sable forms of some 80 or 100 persons who clustered round the *presbiterio*, or sanctuary, in front of the altar. Within the little enclosure or sanctuary, separated from the crowd by a light railing, lay on a common bench, with a little pillow for her head to recline upon, a poorly-clad girl, probably of the peasant or artisan class ; her brother or husband stood at her feet to restrain her (at times) frantic kicking by holding her legs. The door of the vestry opened ; the exhibitor—I mean the priest—came in. The poor girl, not without just reason, 'had an aversion to holy things,' or at least the 400 devils within her distorted body had such an aversion ; and in the confusion of the moment, thinking that the father was 'a holy thing,' she doubled up her legs, screamed out with twitching mouth, her breast heaving, her whole body writhing, and threw herself nearly off the bench. The male attendant seized her legs, the women supported her head and swept out her dishevelled hair. The priest advanced, and mingling familiarly with the shuddering and horror-struck crowd, said, pointing at the suffering child, now sobbing and twitching on the bench, 'Promise me, my children, that you will be prudent (*prudentes*), and of a truth, sons and daughters mine, you shall see marvels.' The promise was given. The exhibitor went to procure stole and short surplice (*estola y roquete*), and returned in a moment, taking his stand at the side of the 'possessed with the devils,' with his face towards the group of students. The order of the day's proceedings was (1) a lecture to the bystanders, and (2) the operation of exorcising the devils. The priest commenced his running commentary on, or explanation of, the strange phenomenon lying panting, foaming at the mouth, to the gaze of the stupid and shuddering crowd of her fellow men and women. The priest began by lamenting with tears that 'It is, unhappily, the fashion of people in this day and age to seek the aid of doctors, sleepwalkers or spiritualists, and quacks of all description'—the words he used were *medicos, somnambulas, y curanderos*—'when they have hard at hand the aid of religion, and an aid and remedy secure and all-sufficient.' He continued his address by saying that the means of which he should make use in the present case were not the

strongest in his power, for to use the strongest was not now allowed. He then said, 'This *joven—i.e.*, young girl—enjoys a most perfect tranquility and calmness so long as she does not catch a sight of holy things, such as the holy water, the priest's dress, the altar, the church, or hear the sound of a bell, the roll of an organ's note resounding through the aisle. You know,' continued the priest, 'that so great is this girl's aversion to holy things, myself included, that she goes into convulsions, kicks, screams, and distorts her body the moment she arrives at the corner of the street, and her convulsive struggles reach their climax when she enters the sacred house of the Most High.' He ended with the following words:—'This girl has often had the same infirmity in bygone years, and the devils have been constantly expelled; but, owing to the laxity of religion in these latter days, they return again to possess her body.' Act the first finished. Act the second, the exorcism, commenced. Turning to the prostrate, shuddering, most unhappy object of his attack, the priest commenced, 'In the name of God, of the saints, of the blessed Host, of every holy sacrament of our church, I adjure thee, Rusbel, come out of her.' (N.B.—'Rusbel' is the name of a devil, the devil having 257 names in Catalonia.) Thus adjured, the girl threw herself in an agony of convulsion, till her distorted face, foam-bespattered lips, and writhing limbs grew well-nigh stiff, at full length upon the floor, and, in language semi-obscene, semi-violent, screamed out, 'I don't choose to come out, you thieves, scamps, robbers.' 'Fulfil your promise, Rusbel,' said the priest. 'You said yesterday you would cast 100 more of your cursed spirits out of this most hapless girl's body. Can't you speak?' 'Yes, I can,' came from the poor girl's foaming lips, 'I can.' 'Yes,' said the *cura*, 'you are a devil of honour; you are a man of your word.' Out of the crowd stepped a plainly attired Spanish gentleman, and said, 'But, father, how can you pray to and praise the devil? I have read somewhere he is a liar and the father of lies. Does he keep his word?' 'Yes,' said the priest, 'he is *muy formal—i.e.*, a man of his word. 'Fulfil your promise, Rusbel.' 'Never,' shouted the devil, or the girl, now lashed into an agony of frenzy. 'You shall,' said the holy father; and the suffering girl, like a bruised and wounded snake, her dress all disarranged, her bosom heaving, wormed and twisted into the arms of the silly women who knelt and cried by her bench of torture. At last from the quivering lips of the girl came the words, 'I will;' but the devil added, with traditional perversity, 'I will cast the 100 out, but by the mouth of the girl.' The priest objected. The exit, he said, of 100 devils out of the small Spanish mouth of the woman would 'leave her suffocated.' Then the maddened girl said she must undress herself, for the devils to escape. This petition the holy father refused. 'Then I will come out through the right foot, but first'—the girl had on a hempen sandal, she was obviously of the poorest class—'you must take off her sandal.' The sandal

was untied; the foot gave a convulsive plunge; the devil and his myrmidons (so the *cura* said, looking round triumphantly) had gone to their own place. And, assured of this, the wretched dupe of a girl lay quite still. The exhibition was announced for 11 a.m. on the succeeding day, and it commenced again. Up came a band of blue-bloused artisans and claimed admittance to the church. The priest stoutly refused entrance to any but women. The men beat the church door; the police came; a scrimmage arose, and the priest retreated in haste; the sick girl was dragged to her lowly home; two mechanics now lie in Barcelona gaol for their share in a called-for, if illegal, demonstration; the street was cleared by the police, and the affair was over. Next day the civil authorities of the town, men of high feeling and great enlightenment, shocked at what they had heard and read (for the whole affair is now in print, and can be bought in Barcelona for a half penny), stopped, by civil decree, the whole affair. In conclusion, a few remarks are due in justice to the authorities. First of all the Bishop, a man of enlightenment and erudition, was not cognizant, I believe, of this freak on the part of the clergy of the church in question. Secondly, the moment it came to the ears of the civil authorities, the sharpest and promptest means were taken to admonish the priest and prevent a repetition of a scandal which had shamed and sickened the whole city of Barcelona."

The priest was only following in the footsteps of holy men of old. It is related that—

"St. Apre, bishop and confessor, being one day at Chalons-sur-Saone, saw a young man who was possessed and from whose mouth, as from a furnace, rushed sulphurous flames. As soon as he saw the saint afar off, he became furious, and tried to bite all who came near him. Everybody got out of his way, but the possessed ran towards the saint as if to seize him. But the holy man advanced without fear to the encounter with the cross in his hand, and ordered the possessed to stop. As the fiery vapour which escaped from his mouth touched the face of the saint, and as the possessed tried to bite him, the bishop made over the mouth of the afflicted man the sign of the cross, and the demon no longer being able to escape in that way went out from the body of the man in the form of a diarrhœa."

After all the good Barcelona priest granted the demon a more pleasant way of exit.

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*Mr. Serjeant Cox and his Prophet.*

An acute and impudent American, named Slade, had for some time driven a good trade in humouring simpletons to the top of their bent by getting so-called spirit-messages written on slates in gratification of their gaping wonder, charging them a fee of one guinea each for the pleasure of