

offensive, evidently remains of *débris*. Pulse and temperature remained normal throughout.

The patient is now well, but much annoyed at losing her "hidden treasure," and not having opportunity for further collection resorts to secreting bread in the same place when she is not watched.

Looking through the *Journal of Mental Science* for the last sixteen years I can find no trace of any other cases excepting one recorded in July, 1895, by Dr. Russell Strapp (now practising in Maritzburg) while assistant medical officer at the Inverness District Asylum. In this instance a female patient had inserted a candle extinguisher and a small round brass ball. All asylum physicians are aware of the anæsthesia found in the insane; I have no doubt, however, that most of my readers, if they saw the collection, would wonder how the patient could possibly have retained such a quantity of miscellaneous articles without incurring any fissure or internal septic complication of some kind. The case naturally suggests sexual perversion, but although the patient had apparently led a vagrant life before admission, nothing has been noted by the attendants in charge beyond the secretion of foreign bodies. However, it is difficult to trace matters among the insane coloured inmates. One other factor may have been "hoarding up of rubbish and brightly coloured objects," common in asylums.

When the coloured patients are bathed, usually all rubbish is taken away; it is therefore possible that this patient may have secreted these articles in her vagina for greater security.

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### Occasional Notes.

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#### *The Thaw Trial.*

The Thaw trial so strikingly demonstrates the existence of defects in the conduct of judicial inquiries, some of which directly affect alienists, that some comment on them is not out of place in the pages of this Journal. These defects, although more prominent in the American, can be seen in lesser degree in English courts.

The most disgraceful defect is the prolongation of the trial

which wealth permits. The penniless murderer of Whiteley is tried and sentenced in a few hours, whilst the millionaire Thaw occupies the courts for weeks and months, with a lavish expenditure of funds that is demoralising to lawyers and witnesses alike. The rich and the poor are certainly not on an equality under these conditions. Yet the equality of the poor and the rich is one of the proudest boasts of that free and incorruptible justice which is so dear to the Anglo-Saxon race.

The unreliability of trial by jury is most unwisely exposed. The weeks occupied in empanelling the Thaw jury constitute a scandal, and the bases of objection to the scores of rejected jurymen are not calculated to make jury service popular, or to obtain the best men. Every man who wished to evade service could do so, leaving the jury to be composed of those who for some motive wished to serve. This is not in accord with the principle of taking the first twelve good men and true on the roster, and trusting to their common-sense judgment on the facts submitted to them, quite apart from anything they may have heard, or any uninformed opinion they may have expressed. Indeed, it is hard to see how the most bigoted defender of the palladium of our liberties can find anything to say in favour of the selection of the Thaw jury. A crowd of pot-boys tossing pence in a tavern would have selected the arbiters of life and death on more ancient, just, and logical principles.

The multiplicity of heavily subsidised legal advocates, tending to the introduction of all kinds of irrelevant evidence, the extreme latitude of cross-examination and the exclusion of real evidence on technical pleas tend to the confusion of the issues and the excitation of emotions and prejudices, which so often lead to a disagreement of the jury.

The introduction of battalions of "specialist" witnesses, on either side, giving evidence in terms usually unintelligible to the jury, and often unintelligible to anybody, tends to the same result.

The effects on the "specialists" need not be commented on; they were well described by our American correspondent in our last issue, and we agree that they are certainly not desirable.

Much of the evil resulting from such trials as the one under consideration arises from the fact that two distinct issues are

being tried at the same time. The main issue—did the accused commit the criminal act?—is within the province of a common jury, if honestly selected, but the second is not. An ordinary jury is certainly not competent to decide whether a man was insane at the time of the committal of a crime, or at any other time, except in the most obvious instances. In all cases in which there is any shadow of doubt the question should be relegated to a jury of experts, nominated by the judge. Our judicial procedure gives a precedent for this in the jury of matrons. This would avoid the conflicting testimony of experts so humiliating to our profession, and would avoid that very unsatisfactory procedure by which one or two experts appointed by the Home Office revise the decision of the jury at a later stage. This latter arrangement does not, and should not, command the confidence of the public. These specialists practically decide the question of life or death in a manner that is directly opposed to the principle and practice of our legal procedure—by avoiding all publicity. That their overruling of the judge and jury is commonly correct may be true, but circumstances are conceivable in which this procedure might be abused. In any case this mode of settling an important judicial decision by a secret medical report to a Home Secretary, who, being a politician, is probably not judicially minded, is a very halting method of arriving at justice.

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*The Registration of Asylum-trained Nurses.*

The appeal to the Medico-Psychological Association to support the petition on behalf of asylum-trained nurses has been most thoroughly successful.

The petition has been signed by more than 7000 persons, and is a record that cannot be ignored in any legislation on this subject.

Two bills are before the House, but it is very improbable that either of them will be passed in the present session; and, as before pointed out, it is very doubtful if registration will ever be carried. In any case this Association can claim to have supported the interests of asylum-trained nurses with promptitude and vigour.

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