

higher than the possibility of performance. This is not in any way meant as a slight upon his abilities, but we think that he has attempted too much; that the field which he has begun to cultivate is too large for any one man to make good use of. The immense amount of labour bestowed upon this work deserves the gratitude of the scientific world, however much its usefulness and readableness have been spoiled by its volume and by the excess of classification which is visible everywhere. Of course the author was quite justified in making many classes to guide himself, and to be prepared to fill up every possible gap with illustrative cases, but the misfortune is that though the skeleton is there, the clothing is wanting. The time may come when this book will be re-written, and we are quite sure that if it be then reduced to half its present size, a most useful and interesting volume will be the result.

---

*The Care of the Insane and their Legal Control.* By JOHN CHARLES BUCKNILL, M.D., F.R.S., &c., &c.

This is a revised and enlarged reprint of the articles on Lunacy Law Reform, which appeared last year in the "British Medical Journal," and which have already attracted so much attention, and excited so much discussion. The opinions expressed in the book are strong and radical, and Dr. Bucknill properly claims to speak with the authority "of a very varied experience of thirty-nine years, during which he has enjoyed the largest opportunities of observing the care and treatment of the insane in every part of the country, both in public and private asylums, and in domestic life." Assuredly, no living man has had the same experience.

The greatest of the questions at issue is this—Are private asylums to be allowed to continue or to be abolished? If we did not regard this Journal as unsuited for being the arena of such a discussion, and if we did not know that all our readers are already well acquainted with all that has been and is being written on the subject, we should certainly have devoted much space to this and the other problems dealt with in this remarkable book. Dr. Bucknill is most earnest in the causes he advocates, viz., the abolition of private asylums, the transference of all the insane who have property to the direct jurisdiction of the Lord Chancellor, all the paupers to that of the Local Government Board, and the abolition of the Board of Commissioners in Lunacy in its present form. His earnestness,

indeed, at times carries him away, for his language is strong up to the point of being laboured. The headings of the chapters, perhaps, savour rather more of the lay press than of that calm wisdom which the weight of years and of official experience might have been expected to bring to the author. "The Prerogative of Asylundom," "Why this is a Certificate," "The Power of the Keys," "Under which King Bezonian?" "Wear Rue with a Difference," convey more of paradox than of information. In one other matter only we would venture to criticise the manner of the book. We think the tone Dr. Bucknill assumes in speaking of the Commissioners in Lunacy almost suggests to his readers a personal dislike. Nothing, no doubt, could be further from fact. But the author is so terribly in earnest that any institution that stands in the way of the carrying out of his views is treated with scant regard for its feelings. The Commissioners may not have come up to an ideal standard, and they undoubtedly owe their existence to the Parliament and not to the Crown; but we can't see that these are reasons why they should cease to exist. Parliament and statutory law now govern the realm and all that it contains; it is simply quixotic at this time of day to talk of reviving the ancient power of the Crown as the legal guardian of the insane. The Commissioners under their statutory powers have done more for the insane in fifty years than the Crown had done for five hundred.

This part of Dr. Bucknill's argument we regard as of no force whatever. It is to Parliament and its statutes that we must look for all improvements in our Lunacy Policy for the future, and we cannot see why an insane man with property is in so utterly different a position as the man without that the one must be handed over to a different guardianship from the other. The author's argument against the present position of the Commissioners is, without doubt, the weak point of the book.

But we have done with criticism. The book is a landmark of the time. It expresses in the most forcible way one aspect of a great social and medical question. It will be treated with marked respect. It should not be allowed to excite angry feelings in those who differ from the author's views. Let us have the other side of the question as vigorously and fearlessly, and, above all, as honestly put. The Private Asylum question is not yet ripe for settlement. One

very important and not uninterested party has not yet had its say. The sane British public has not yet spoken on this part of the question. The disposal of the insane is a most important matter, and the doctors' opinions on the subject may be very valuable, while the specialists and Parliamentary hobbyists may help much in the solution of the problem; but when all is done the public that has to pay the bill must give the order.

---

*Insanity and Homicide. Des Homicides commis par les Aliénés.*  
Par le Docteur E. BLANCHE. Paris, 1878.

On the consideration that the old professor might be laden with sins, the would-be murderer of the philosopher Kant, when about to strike the fatal blow, turned away, and, soon after, murdered a child whose five years' experience of life was not likely to be so heavily burdened. So at least the story goes; and the briefly-told incident involves a multiplicity—not to say a conflict—of emotions and ideas, such as murder only can call up.

De Quincey, tracing with his quaint humour the connection between philosophy and the "fine art" of murder, refers to the "good taste" of the "amateur," in not murdering an old, arid, and ardent metaphysician, who, but for the *accident* of a "peevish morality" would have been a dead man before his time had come. We do not know what became of the accomplished "artist," but we can readily imagine an investigation being held as to the state of his mind "at the time he committed the act," and later on. Had his responsibility been gauged by our English legal test or dictum, "a knowledge of right and wrong," we fear that he would have fared badly, and that he would have been "hung" (as Royal Academicians would say), and therefore served as a further illustration of "high" art.

Fortunately, now-a-days, the test referred to may be characterized as *only a dictum*, and lawyers themselves have come to recognize the expediency of bringing their guiding principles on this subject more into accordance with the practical teachings of psychological observation.

"I concur most cordially in the proposed alteration of the law, having been always strongly of opinion that, as the pathology of insanity abundantly establishes, there are forms of mental disease in which, though the patient is quite aware he is about to do wrong, the will becomes overpowered by