

tions, and sympathy for those committed to our care, we shall best do honour to their memory, and best serve our country, our profession, and our God.

The Insane Colony of Gheel Revisited. By JOHN WEBSTER,
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(Read at the Annual Meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association, held in Edinburgh, July 31st, 1866.)

NEARLY ten years ago I visited the very ancient establishment above named, whereof notes appeared in Dr. Winslow's 'Journal of Psychological Medicine' for 1857, and which, I was led to believe, by the discussion that ensued, rendered this interesting institution better known in Great Britain than heretofore. Since that period, various professional and other travellers, as well English as foreign, have paid visits to Gheel, and also subsequently published valuable reports, with remarks on improvements recently accomplished. Being anxious to inspect a second time this colony, and observe the ameliorations which Dr. Bulkens, its able medical superintendent, had effected, I again visited Gheel during May last; and thinking some account thereof may interest members of the distinguished Society I have the honour to address, my present communication has been drawn up, trusting, at least, it may excite some attention from philanthropists and psychological physicians.

However, I would first briefly notice the ancient legend whereon the reputation of that far-famed retreat for insane persons is asserted to rest, and which, I hope, will not prove wholly uninteresting, although likely familiar to members of this learned Association. According to tradition, late in the sixth century, Dymphna, a daughter of an Irish king, was converted to Christianity by an anchorite named Gerebert. The father of this young lady felt greatly enraged at her conversion; and being also enamoured of his own child, threatened dire vengeance. As the novice remained obstinate to parental authority, accompanied by her spiritual adviser she fled across the ocean, and ultimately arrived at Gheel, in which remote district of western Europe, Dymphna then resolved to dedicate herself in future to devotion and celibacy, along with St. Gerebert.

But the old pagan sovereign having subsequently discovered the fugitives' retreat, followed in their track, and insisted upon his daughter again changing her adopted faith; but to such proposal she still refused compliance. This continued obstinacy made the savage monarch so furious, that at one blow with a sword he cut

off his daughter's head, having also mercilessly beheaded St. Gerebert a short time previously. These cruel deeds, it is further reported, so greatly frightened several lunatics then present, and likewise produced such strong impressions upon their excited feelings, that they became cured as if by enchantment. Immediately the cry "A miracle, a miracle!" was raised by wondering bystanders; and thus "Dymphna," "saint and martyr," has ever afterwards been the patron of all demented victims, in Gheelois estimation. This belief having spread abroad, not only in Campine but to other countries, lunatics hence flocked to Gheel, in order to get cured through St. Dymphna's intercession. About A.D. 1200, a church was erected on the spot where the two murders just described had been perpetrated, in which the female saint's bones were subsequently deposited, and are still preserved in this sacred temple, according to popular opinion.

Nevertheless, leaving that disputed question for casuists to settle, it will suffice to state, that the tabernacle said to contain St. Dymphna's remains usually stands on four stone pillars behind the church altar, and has a passage under it of about three feet in height, through which lunatics formerly brought to Gheel were accustomed to pass on bended knees. Poets say, "the palace stairs of great personages were often worn away in ancient times by beggars asking favours." Here that sarcasm is really verified, since the stone floor of this much-revered locality is indented to some extent by the crawling limbs of devotees, who came thither to be freed from their mental malady. Similar genuflexions are indubitably now much more rare than in ancient superstitious times, although examples of such ceremonies have occurred in years not long by-gone, where maniacs devoutly crawled through this hallowed precinct, as well as some persons desirous themselves to obviate the contingency of being subsequently attacked by mental aberration. When these formalities took place, the parties accompanying a lunatic continued singing hymns and praying during the whole time, so as to assure more certainly the saint's favorable intercession. Near the central part of St. Dymphna's church, and on the left of its choir, a large case like a sentry-box contains the saint's figure, gorgeously clothed in velvet, with lace, gold, and other ornaments. On the other side of this choir is placed, as if by way of counterpoise, nearly the half of what had formed a stone coffin, wherein, tradition says, were found the saint's mortal remains. But the most singular portion of this sacred edifice is a dark dungeon-looking apartment, in a small house attached to the principal church tower, and apparently used as the present occupants' kitchen, where maniacs formerly brought to Gheel were first lodged, during at least nine days consecutively. Throughout that period, persons reputed insane remained during day-time closely bound to the fireplace by

an iron chain connected with a ring, also iron, on one wrist, besides having another attached to their ankle ; while, at night, the wretched victim was tied down in a wooden bed, containing straw instead of a mattress, by strong iron chains, to prevent movement. Besides such harsh treatment, during the *entire nine* days considered essential to ensure recovery, *nine* young virgins, hired for that specific purpose, made a daily procession round the church aisles, passing *nine* times on bended knees under St. Dymphna's tabernacle ; invocations being likewise offered up for the patient's recovery ; at the same time that a priest recited certain prayers, held essential on these occasions. At one side of this room, close under its roof, there is a small gallery, from whence relatives and curious spectators could witness whatever mystical ceremonies might be going on below. But proceedings like those described being now rare, a stranger's curiosity can be very seldom gratified.

The commune of Gheel, strictly speaking, constitutes part of a province designated Campine, or "Kempen-land," which signifies flat, or plain, without trees. It is fifty miles from Brussels, and forms a level but somewhat elevated portion of eastern Belgium, when compared with adjacent low-lying lands. Gardens and fertile fields occupy the vicinity ; but on several sides beyond, these often pretty enclosures are surrounded by sandy steppes, or wastes of considerable extent, having quite a different character. The environs are, however, much more productive than outlying districts ; while the town itself occupies a moderately elevated position, lying betwixt the river named "Great Nèthe" and two tributaries, but much smaller, called the Eastern or Little Nèthes. Although not very salubrious—intermittent fevers and typhus being sometimes frequent, while during winter pectoral diseases often prevail—still the district is not deemed so unhealthy as various portions of Belgium, where damp soils and malarious emanations act injuriously on the human frame. The entire commune has nearly 11,000 inhabitants, of whom about 4000 reside in Gheel itself. The principal street is long, broad, and possesses some good houses, with several shops and comfortable hotels, especially the "Turnhout Arms." On one side of its central Place stands the cathedral church of St. Amand, St. Dymphna's being in another quarter ; besides which, adjacent streets and hedge-enclosed gardens make Gheel resemble most Belgium towns of the same magnitude.

The entire colony in superficial extent comprises 27,000 acres ; its greatest length, from north to south, being nearly fourteen miles ; the breadth, from east to west, eight and a half miles ; and altogether may be reckoned at from thirty-seven to thirty-eight miles in circumference. The commune is divided into four sections, within which there are seventeen hamlets, some being almost little villages. Each section has a physician, under whose special charge all lunatics

dwelling within its limits are placed, while the superintending physician overlooks the whole establishment. The latter also receives every new patient or lunatic transferred from any private dwelling to the central infirmary, either because the party's physical health had become seriously affected, or mental malady required special medical attention; and further, if temporary seclusion was deemed necessary in particular cases, but which could not be properly carried out at an ordinary residence by the patient's usual attendant.

On the 20th of last May, the total insane residents in Gheel and commune amounted to 1025, being 512 male and 513 female lunatics, or an equality of both sexes, who were divided into four separate classes, with reference to the respective sums paid for their maintenance; but, first, into indigent paupers; and second, pensioners, or private patients, according to ordinary language. The former class comprised 908, of whom 432 were male and 476 female lunatics; the male pensioners being 80, with only 37 females in that category. Again, of the entire number, 867 were native Belgians, the remaining 158 being born in other countries. Throughout the district where lunatics are only allowed to reside, the total licensed houses are 726, classified into four divisions; and seeing the commune contains about 2100 different residences, it hence follows, at least one in every three has a resident lunatic. Houses of the best class amount to 72, where from 1000 to 2500 francs are paid annually; the second comprises 148 residences, in which from 500 to 1000 francs is the remuneration; the third consists of 382 houses, the payment being beyond 200 and up to 500 francs; while dwellings in the fourth list are only 124, and in these 200 francs is the usual allowance. Unless under particular circumstances, not more than three lunatics can reside under one roof; and two demented inmates cannot occupy the same room. Special sanction may, however, be granted by the managing committee, in concurrence with the superintending physician, for a larger number of patients being received, but only after he has reported that the locality and all essential appliances are properly adapted for the proposed augmentation. Usually the sexes are lodged in separate houses; nevertheless, with regard to aged persons, whose malady may be chronic and deemed inoffensive, a male lunatic is occasionally allowed to live in the same family where an insane old woman analogous in character also resides. All suicidal, dangerous, homicidal, or mischievously disposed insane persons are, however, rarely received, or allowed to remain after they decidedly manifest such characteristics; and when patients so become, they are usually sent home, or transferred to some asylum elsewhere. Further, the authorities generally place boisterous and agitated maniacs at remotely situated cottages, or

farmhouses located in open heaths distant from the town, where, having few neighbours, they cannot disturb any insane patient or cause much annoyance. Again, such parties, if much excited, may walk about in gardens or fields adjacent without danger to others or themselves. Being also thereby placed beyond the observation of strangers, and not likely to come in contact with similarly afflicted fellow-creatures, evil consequences seldom result from such arrangements.

Tranquil patients and many of the highest paying pensioners live in Gheel, the total cases of that description being upwards of 230, or beyond one fifth of the whole insane population residing within the commune.

On making inquiry, I learned only one house contained five lunatic inmates; several had four, or more frequently two, but one was most common. It should be stated, however, that recently a large mansion has been constructed in the chief street of Gheel, at an expense of more than 50,000 francs, which will be adequate for eight patients, each having separate bedrooms, and also several a sitting apartment, should such additional accommodation be required. There is likewise an extensive and well-laid-out garden adjoining, with various other appliances deemed essential for the amusement or occupation of lunatics. In short, this new dwelling forms an excellent "maison de santé" of a superior description. Only four insane patients lodged at this house when I visited its interior, all being foreigners, viz., one English, two French, and one Swiss.

In consequence of varied improvements lately effected at Gheel, every class, especially those designated pensioners, or who pay a high annual board, have augmented in number since 1856, when the aggregate insane population was 774, or 251 less than at present. In other words, there are now one third more lunatics inhabiting the commune than ten years ago, when I first visited "Kempeland." Such facts prove the increased repute which this colony has acquired, and the more favorable opinion it has obtained among the Belgian people, as also the constituted authorities, who now transfer thither a greater number of insane patients, contrasted with previous periods. Through this large augmentation of resident lunatics, the money received at least amounts to £15,000 annually, besides various collateral sources of revenue. In truth, the town and vicinity almost exclusively depend upon such means of income, especially as the commune has little or no trade, excepting what its peculiar population may require for their necessary wants and maintenance.

During five years ending 31st December, 1865, the total insane patients admitted at Gheel amounted to 926, 500 being male and 426 female lunatics. The number of recoveries reported were 228, or 24.62 per cent., calculated according to the aggregate admissions.

the deaths were, however, more numerous, viz. 409, or 43·06 per cent.; but this large mortality may be easily accounted for by the chronic types of mental maladies which affected numerous inmates, as likewise the long period many had been insane. Besides these results, it should be also stated that a number of patients left the colony ameliorated, in addition to others removed by relatives, or the communes who had sent them to Gheel originally. According to the authority already quoted, 141 male and female lunatics, after being some time resident, left either uncured, or before they had derived benefit.

Respecting this point, and likewise to illustrate further the Gheelois system, I would refer to another instructive table, also kindly supplied by Dr. Bulkens. According to that valuable return, which comprises ten years ending 31st December, 1865, among a total of 1623 insane patients of all categories, 45, or less than 3 per 100 escaped; while 133 were subsequently removed, either from being dangerous or likely to disturb public tranquillity, and whose malady was deemed incompatible with the régime, free-air liberty, and family mode of management pursued. Remarking, however, that only 133 lunatics, or about 8 per cent. of the whole admissions, were so discharged, it cannot be consequently asserted, with justice, that any extensive or special selection of cases different from the practice prevailing at asylums was made during the period specified.

Another important feature in reference to patients received at Gheel during the same ten years, and also up to the 20th of last May, equally deserves mention; namely, the types of mental disease which were noticed among 1696 cases it comprehends, besides the actual recoveries registered under each category. By Dr. Bulkens's classification of these 1696 patients, 91 male and 127 female lunatics laboured under "melancholia," being 218 altogether, or 12·85 per cent. of the admissions. Among these, 46 males and 56 females recovered, giving a ratio of more than 46 cures per 100, or 50 per cent. in males and 44 in females. "Mania" affected 586 individuals, or upwards of one third the whole admissions; comprising 298 male and 288 female lunatics, of whom 140 males and 114 females were cured; being 43·17 per cent. in that division, or 47 per cent. in males, but only 39 in females. By "delirium" 96 patients were attacked, the sexes being equal, or 48 cases of each; among whom 17 females but only 11 males were cured, or 35·40 per cent. of the former against about 23 per cent. of the latter. "Dementia," like mania, characterised a large proportion of the admissions, viz., 242 males and 275 females, or 517 altogether, forming nearly one third the total cases received; but of whom not more than 31 males and 19 females recovered; that is, 12·80 per cent. of the former and only 8·87 per cent. of the latter sex. In short,

most of the patients thus classified were incurable, which opinion is even more applicable to the 136 cases of general paralysis then admitted, comprising 103 men and 33 women, of whom not one recovered. This remark likewise applies strictly to 143 cases of epilepsy, including 101 male and 42 female patients, seeing no case ended in convalescence. Therefore, deducting these 279 instances of general paralysis and epilepsy from the 1696 cases above enumerated, it follows that among 1417 lunatics remaining, and comprehending every other variety of mental disease, the total recoveries being 434, the general ratio of cures amounted to 30.69 per 100 admissions; while, it should be further remembered, many of the patients had remained a long time insane. But another important fact deserves also special regard, viz., among 436 insane patients deemed curable when admitted, and of whom some reasonable hope was then entertained respecting their ultimate recovery, 302, or 69 per cent., left Gheel convalescent. Such favorable results speak strongly in support of the Gheelois system, and may well bear comparison with statements given in official annual reports emanating from various public institutions for lunatics both in Great Britain as elsewhere.

Notwithstanding great freedom characterises the treatment pursued, objectors still assert that numerous lunatics residing in the colony are confined within their domiciles, often wear straps, manacles, and even have hobbles to prevent escape. In 1856, when I formerly visited Gheel, the total patients then restrained in any form were 69 among 774 lunatics at that period under treatment. During my recent visit, among upwards of 1000 lunatic patients, I learned that the daily average of persons under even temporary restraint by manacles seldom if ever exceeded 20 examples; while those who had hobbles, to prevent straying in fields adjacent, by records kept rarely amounted to five instances. But even then such patients could often promenade in the gardens attached to their dwelling; and I heard of none being confined by strait-waistcoats or analogous appliances. At the new infirmary, where seclusion-rooms have been constructed, only one patient, a female, was in temporary confinement when I inspected that recent addition to the colony; but, it should be added, this refractory case would ilikely so remain during a few hours. Indeed, she had speedily become tranquil after entry, and was very quiet when I visited her apartment.

The infirmary just noticed constitutes a novel feature in the improved appliances introduced at Gheel. It forms a handsome building in the immediate vicinity; has two storeys, with a frontage of fifteen large windows, and every appendage usually seen at similar structures. Indeed, the ventilation, amplitude of dormitories, courtyards for recreation, baths, sitting-rooms, with other appliances, are all of a superior description, and prove highly creditable to Dr.

Bulkens, who, along with the architect, were the chief directing authorities while it was in progress. About 60 lunatics can be accommodated as patients should their physical ailments, mental condition, or recent arrival in the colony render a lengthened residence necessary. At my visit, besides the female already mentioned under temporary seclusion, I recognised a dozen other patients, of whom several had been brought from their customary dwellings on account of bodily infirmities requiring special treatment. In addition to these objects, when a lunatic first arrives at Gheel the party is always placed in an appropriate ward, so that the type and symptoms of each individual case may be specially observed; as likewise thus to enable the superintending physician to determine, among what particular class or section the patient should be ranked. Again, whenever any lunatic became bodily diseased, or if an access of mental malady supervened which required special attention, or it was deemed advisable to place the sufferer under more immediate observation, than at a rural cottage or in town, then removal to the infirmary was ordered by the sectional physician.

The recently opened infirmary, and licensing private houses of a superior description for receiving pensioners, paying higher annual boards than formerly, constitute important changes in the improved arrangements at Gheel. Seeing this infirmary—often recommended by physicians both native and foreign—has been finally established, particularly through Dr. Bulkens's exertions, I suggested to a high official authority in Belgium that it should be designated by a name of much repute among European medical men and philanthropists. During my former visit to the various lunatic establishments in Belgium, I made an analogous suggestion respecting the new asylum then constructing near Ghent, and which was built especially under the immediate direction of Dr. Guislain, the eminent psychologist and physician. As that proposition was ultimately adopted, and the establishment is now officially called "*Hospice Guislain*," I hope a similar resolution may be taken by the Belgian authorities, so that the Gheel Infirmary shall be known in future as "*Hospice Bulkens*."

Among a community comprising numerous lunatics, the police and other arrangements must, of course, be strict and various, in order to meet contingencies. Thus, during summer months patients cannot leave their residence before 6 in the morning or after 8 in the evening; and during winter, before 8 a.m., or beyond 4 in the afternoon; while only tranquil lunatics and those who conduct themselves decently, or seem not likely to annoy other parties, are permitted to frequent entertainments and places of public resort where they can drink beer, smoke, or enjoy themselves like ordinary frequenters, unless with reference to spirituous liquors. In consequence of existing regulations, as also doubtless originating from other causes, great tranquillity prevails throughout the town; and,

speaking from my own personal observation during the period I lately remained at Gheel, as likewise when formerly visiting the colony, few towns of the same population, where the residents were rational beings, seemed to contain better conducted inhabitants, or appeared altogether so quiet as in the peculiarly constituted capital of Campine, whether at night or daytime.

During recent years, much more care has been enforced respecting the accommodation and general treatment, which insane residents should receive from host or hostess. The licences of several have been withdrawn, in consequence of not fully complying with the rules established, or through negligence towards inmates. Many new houses have also been licensed, in consequence of the augmented number of lunatics sent to Gheel. Further, as the pensioner class, who pay often larger sums than in former years, have also increased, and as those houses where inmates were comfortable now more likely obtain patients paying higher rates of board than otherwise, this circumstance has produced emulation among householders, which the authorities very properly encourage. The accommodation afforded is generally good, considering the class of patients or their previous mode of life; and the treatment indigent residents frequently receive from parties with whom they are placed, to my mind seemed often more than commensurate with the established remuneration. Nay, according to various statements, I firmly believe, were it not on account of the labour and assistance many recipients of insane boarders thereby obtain in their respective trades or occupations, having to lodge, feed, and maintain demented residents for the very small payments allowed, cannot always prove profitable, or even remunerative.

Irrespective of several other important features characterising the Gheel system, this fact deserves special notice—viz., that it becomes more easy, than sometimes at public asylums, to place patients under circumstances where they can be employed in occupations analogous to those they had pursued previously. A large proportion being labourers, mechanics, domestic servants, and the like, the authorities can at once transfer, for instance, an operative shoemaker, a blacksmith, agricultural labourer, or dairy-servant, to dwellings wherein they may be occupied much in the same manner as when enjoying good mental health. Further, being also under proper surveillance, whatever treatment is deemed judicious can likewise be adopted. Seeing a large proportion of insane residents at Gheel are agricultural labourers—indeed, they usually constitute about one fourth of the entire number—while persons employed in household work are even more numerous, besides many dressmakers and milliners, as also carpenters, tailors, with other handicrafts, it thence becomes among the ordinary Gheelois population not difficult to place lunatics with hosts where useful arrangements in that

respect can be accomplished. Still, at Gheel numerous patients are unwilling or unable to work through various causes, the proportion being about 30 per cent. in that category, which therefore leaves seventy among every hundred lunatics occupied according to their respective capabilities.

Although proceedings of the kind mentioned are easily adopted at this insane colony, impartial observers must admit, however much the Gheelois method may meet approval in many respects, and deserves imitation, it will often prove a difficult undertaking to institute an analogous procedure elsewhere, especially in localities whose general population has neither been accustomed to associate with, nor ever had any experience in managing lunatics, or imbecile fellow-creatures. At Gheel the domestic arrangements and customs are dissimilar to those in most other countries, while an experience of many centuries has rendered its inhabitants like hereditary attendants upon the insane, but which attribute is rare, or would not be easily created among any large community. Hence the obstacles which must always exist, whenever a similar colony on an extensive scale is proposed. Further, it cannot be denied, for lunatics belonging to the upper or middle classes, the discipline, employments, and mode of life necessarily followed according to the Gheelois method could be seldom enforced among ladies and gentlemen. For lunatics belonging to the lower orders the system there adopted assumes, however, quite another aspect, and is entirely free from several objections enunciated by adverse critics.

Occasionally writers entertain the opinion, that insanity is oftener met with among persons born in the Gheelois commune, than throughout districts having a sane population. Both Dr. Parigot, late of Gheel, and Dr. Bulkens especially, who has investigated the point, think such idea erroneous. Indeed, the latter says, "Mental diseases do not prevail so frequently among Gheel natives, as in various localities belonging to the province of Antwerp;" while he has likewise ascertained that, in the adjacent canton of Herenthals and Turnhout, where no lunatics are received, the proportion of insane among the native population attains even a higher ratio than characterises Gheel. Another feature should also be noticed, namely, Gheel being situated in a plain extending a great distance, and having no hills or mountains to protect it from any wind which blows, the streets are often very dusty in summer, while during winter northerly or easterly winds are not salubrious. Still, longevity occasionally prevails among insane residents, several having been patients upwards of half a century, others during forty or thirty years, and some had become nonagenarians; but I heard of no individual who could be truly considered a centenarian.

The great annual fête or "Kermis"—viz., "wake" or fair, in English—appointed for the Gheel commune, having taken place

during my stay, I was therefore able to witness the manners and customs of its general population, but more especially the effects which public festivities, ecclesiastical ceremonies of unusual pomp, much popular excitement, and the great crowds assembled from adjacent districts, produced among many lunatics who participated in the varied proceedings of the four days dedicated, in the first instance to religious duties, but afterwards to dancing, beer-drinking, and frequenting various "herbergs," estaminets, &c. On Whit-Sunday, the 20th of May, or Pentecost, St. Dymphna's church was crammed with upwards of a thousand worshippers at one time, but always changing, and of whom many had apparently come to see its gorgeous decorations, or prostrate themselves before the patron-saint's image and tabernacle containing her relics, which was now placed in the centre aisle on an elevated pedestal or throne.

Interiorly, the church was profusely decorated with flowers, gay festoons, canopies, orange and other trees, besides a diversity of ornaments specially prepared for this grand occasion. Over the saint's tabernacle, the figure of a little winged angel, having a laurel sprig in its right hand, with a crown of flowers in the left, seemed as if descending from above, in order to deposit both on the receptacle of St. Dymphna's venerated remains. High mass was also being performed by splendidly attired priests and many officials. An organ pealed forth impressive music, accompanied by numerous voices, whose singing was so good that altogether, I have seldom heard any church service better performed, even in Italian or Spanish cathedrals. Around St. Dymphna's tabernacle, numerous devotees were praying on bended knees, and appearing to invoke the saint's intercession. Many had strings of beads in their extended hands; and after praying during a few minutes, they walked round the precinct several times, but finally resumed their former kneeling position, yet still praying, although inaudibly.

At one time I counted at least twenty-five persons so employed; and whatever some critics may think of such superstitious devotions addressed to what seemed only a covered box, but said to contain the relics of an Irish maiden, none can doubt the sincerity of feeling actuating parties who appeared thus to pray for their own recovery, or of mentally afflicted relatives. After making these genuflexions, generally three times, but occasionally oftener, a number went next before an image of the Virgin Mary having Christ in her arms, both gorgeously apparelled, with jewelled crowns on their heads, and placed under an elegant canopy, having bouquets of flowers around, to perform further devotions.

Subsequently, many of the same individuals also worshipped at St. Dymphna's image, much after the style enacted near her relics. As additional indications of the veneration entertained respecting the martyr whose shrine had here attracted such crowds, the numerous

silver offerings attached to her attire unmistakably demonstrate, whilst indicating the great ignorance prevalent among a Campine populace. Moreover, in order that such sentiments might not be forgotten, or perhaps to proclaim the saint's merits, on the border of her bespangled velvet robe this inscription was embroidered in golden letters so large as to make the words easily readable by even distant spectators—viz., "*St. Dymphna, Hoop der Krankzinnigen*" (St. Dymphna, the hope of lunatics).

Sceptics may ridicule the absurd notions actuating apparently numerous persons assembled in St. Dymphna's church at this day's festival, which lasted several hours consecutively. That view is, however, incorrect, seeing various individuals who had taken part in the ceremonies acknowledge, they purposely visited St. Dymphna's Church, to pray for the saint's intercession in favour of afflicted relatives or patients in the colony. Among several instances of this description, I may mention that of a Belgian serjeant whose insane wife had been some time in the commune. This otherwise intelligent soldier, although admitting the kind treatment received, nevertheless felt faith in St. Dymphna's influence, and had specially visited her shrine on the present, as during a former occasion, in order that he might, by imitating other devotees, promote his wife's convalescence.

At St. Amand's, the chief or communal church of Gheel, a great crowd was likewise assembled, its interior being also profusely decorated with flowers, flags, orange-trees, and numerous ornaments, at the same time that high mass and so-forth was performed. There, as at St. Dymphna's, I recognised various lunatics who, both in this and the former sacred edifice, conducted themselves like rational beings. However, as the services were purely ecclesiastical, although conducted in grand style and really pompous, while many fashionably attired ladies were noticed among a very crowded congregation, no ordinary observer, ignorant of the fact, would have surmised that a number of persons then present were actually insane. Indeed, I have scarcely or ever observed more decorum than that which uniformly prevailed during my protracted visits to both the churches designated. Considering the multitude of persons congregated, the consequent pressure occasioned by many people anxious to get near, and the lengthened period they virtually remained, it is no exaggeration to say, the quietude and order which everywhere prevailed were remarkable.

Next day, or Monday, similar services again took place at St. Dymphna's and St. Amand's churches; while the number of kneeling worshippers near the martyr's sarcophagus was even larger than the previous day, or Sunday. On this occasion, the silver receptacle of the saint's bones was now uncovered, which may account for the much greater crowds who were constantly surrounding, and evidently

contemplating with deep devotional feelings, what was really a splendid specimen of art in the form of a temple, and which, from its size as also elaborate workmanship, must have been very costly. Apparently, many of the votaries present had come from some distance in order to invoke St. Dymphna's aid in favour of a demented relative or friend; while others were patients, as on the day previous. Here, again, and throughout the whole time I remained, the greatest order prevailed; and no one could have inferred from outward appearances, or the behaviour of any individual, that lunatics formed a portion of this large assemblage.

Another phase of quite a different character yet remains to be described, so as to illustrate still further the popular proceedings and festivities in which sane as likewise insane residents of Gheel, with other spectators, took an active part during its kermis. Soon after five in the afternoon, accompanied by Dr. Bulkens as cicerone, we visited several "herbergs"—estaminets which had large rooms attached, where many persons previously engaged in religious services at St. Dymphna's and St. Amand's churches were dancing, or drinking beer; while gay music and talking of numerous parties made the whole scene highly exciting, but not disorderly or uproarious. In one spacious apartment, at least 300 persons were assembled—several being lunatics—who seemed to enjoy the spectacle quite as much as any party present, and conducted themselves like their more rational companions at this reunion. Indeed, had my conductor not pointed out several male and female insane residents at Gheel, I should not otherwise have known any patients were in that festive assembly. We afterwards visited other dancing parties, where much hilarity also prevailed; but in no instance could I recognise by their conduct that any guest laboured under mental aberration. Similar amusements took place next evening, while there was a grand procession of St. Dymphna's relics within her church and vicinity in the forenoon; but everything went off satisfactorily. At least, I have not since heard of any conduct which indicated that the varied proceedings peculiar to the annual kermis then celebrated had caused unpleasant consequences among the Gheelois lunatic population.

In concluding my sketches of the insane colony at Gheel, which some gentlemen whom I have the honour to address may perhaps think rather discursive, I would nevertheless beg leave to remark finally, whether frequenting the dwellings of resident lunatics, perambulating streets, visiting churches, sauntering in secluded high-hedged footpaths, gardens or fields; and notwithstanding I often recognised insane patients as well idle as occupied, even sometimes without an attendant, I never noticed any unpleasant occurrence. On the contrary, I can confidently assert, from personal observation, Gheel and its immediate neighbourhood seemed generally quieter, than most localities having an equally numerous population, more

especially where lunatics seldom if ever promenade public thoroughfares. Consequently, the idea of then residing in a town where mad people were numerous, and lived almost like ordinary inhabitants, appeared to my mind of doubtful realisation.

The Effects of the Present System of Prison Discipline on the Body and Mind. By J. BRUCE THOMSON, L.C.R.S., Edin.; Resident Surgeon, General Prison for Scotland at Perth.

(Read at the Annual Meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association, held in Edinburgh, July 31st, 1866.)

MR. PRESIDENT,—My first duty on rising to address this Association is to thank you, sir, personally, for your kindness in proposing me, and the members for electing me, to the honour of being a member of the Medico-Psychological Association.

This paper is due chiefly to your own suggestion; and I do now feel that it was somewhat bold in me to accept your hint, and venture upon an inquiry so difficult, and of such paramount social and psychological interest. I hope the subject may be found not altogether aside from the proper functions of this learned body, as I certainly regard it opportune for my having the benefit of any opinions that may emerge in the minds of those I now address, many of whom are eminent for ability and experience in mental diseases so prevalent in prison life.

Can long sentences to penal servitude in prisons be carried through without serious detriment to the bodily and mental condition of prisoners? This was the proposition propounded only a few years ago, when the transportation of convicts was set aside, and the present system, called the separate system of prison discipline, was introduced. In this paper, what I propose is, to examine the results of this sanitary experiment; and how far we are enabled to judge of its success and solve the grave problem as to the effects of long imprisonment on body and mind. The study of the character and diseases of the criminal population has become a specialty confined to but a few; and I feel it all the more incumbent to tabulate my observations, which have been continuously given to the subject for nearly ten years.

Physical suffering, as you know, for the last quarter of a century has been almost wholly ignored in prison discipline. Howard and Romilly did for criminals what Conolly and Pinel have done for the