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DESCRIPTION OF THE ROYAL HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE, AT PALERMO.

TRANSLATED FROM THE JOURNAL OF SCIENCE, LETTERS AND ARTS OF SICILY,
BY W. TULLIDGE, OF FLORENCE, TUSCANY.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

WHEN we are disposed to exercise our judgment, with due discrimination, upon any improvements in public institutions and useful establishments, it is necessary to wait for time to show the advantage of such improvements, and if the result may correspond with our anticipations. With these impressions, we have undertaken to discourse of, and to describe, the Royal Hospital for the Insane, at Palermo; an establishment for which we are indebted to the philanthropy and indefatigable zeal of the Baron Peter Pisani, whose efforts, combined with the means he has obtained from the generosity of our government, affords a certain guarantee for the benefits to be derived from his useful labors. In fact, if we had given a description, at any former period, we should not have been able to have done it with adequate justice to the establishment, nor to its philanthropic institutor and supporter, since the descriptions which have appeared do not, by any means, convey a just idea of its great utility.

A little more than half a mile from Palermo, upon the road which leads to Parco, rises now this magnificent hospital, which was at first only intended to receive patients who were natives of Palermo; but having been much enlarged, is now called the Royal Hospital for the Insane of Sicily. The building is decorated, externally, with simple and appropriate ornaments, and amongst others, an allegoric picture, painted in imitation of basso-relievo, in the upper part of the front, by the celebrated painter Rioli. On one side of the entrance, is the porter's lodge, and the court-yard, which is in the centre, and is decorated with a variety of ornamental plants, in vases. On the left angle of the court-yard, is the room for visitors, on each side of which is a parlatorium, one for the males and the other for the females, where they undergo an examination on their first admission, in order to ascertain the employments they are capable of, or may be made capable of, and to what class of the insane they belong, so that they may be assigned to such part of the establishment as may be suitably adapted for them—the meritorious patron having classified the insane patients into four divisions, and assigned to each of these their distinct portions, or departments of the building; namely—the *furious* class, the *melancholic*, the *tranquil*, and the *idiotic*.

Near to the room for the reception of visitors, is the Anatomical

Museum ; beyond the museum, in the same court-yard, are the rooms for the people who are employed to attend upon the insane ; on each side are bathing rooms, one for the men, the other for the women. On the left side of the magnificent stair-case, we pass to a large saloon, and on the other side to a kitchen and refectory. These parts of the building are alone designed for the accommodation of the men, as well as the women ; every other part being so arranged, and divided, that the females are all on the right, as we enter the building, and the males on the left. These apartments open to an inner court-yard, having a fountain in the middle, under two Gothic arches. The first wards, on each side of the court-yard, are assigned to the peaceable and tranquil class of lunatics ; next to these, and near to a small garden, laid out in the Chinese style, are the wards for the idiots ; the passage, which divides the inner court from the Chinese garden, leads into a large saloon, on the left, where the insane people are employed at the looms, and where more cloth is fabricated (of different qualities) by the insane, than is required for the various uses of the establishment. From thence, we pass to an interior stair-case, by which we ascend to the upper story, where is a spacious saloon, assigned to the melancholic lunatics. On one side of this saloon, is the infirmary for these lunatics ; and on the other side, apartments are fitted up in a secure manner, and adapted for the accommodation of such insane persons as are boarded at their own expense, or that of their friends.

Returning again to the principal court-yard on the left, is the grand stair-case, by which we ascend to the first story, assigned to those admitted *a pensione*. The first corridor is a common passage for such insane persons. On one side, is a saloon of recreation ; on the other, are various apartments, very commodiously fitted up. At the end of the corridor is the infirmary for the poor ; and near to this, is a room which opens to the church. This room is for the accommodation of the insane patients *a pensione*, in their religious duties. By another corridor, to the left, we pass to the opposite angle of the establishment, where are the apartments and a saloon for the convalescents. Further on is a magnificent saloon, painted with rural scenery, for the accommodation of the poor melancholic class of the insane. A third corridor, parallel with the first, comprehends other accommodations, where there is a communication from the first story, for the use of female patients *a pensione*. A fourth corridor, parallel to the second, conducts to the first, and thus the whole four corridors form a square. The fourth corridor opens to the internal part of the establishment, where are situated the apartments of the director, and also a strong room, softly cushioned, for the reception of insane patients who are subject to violent paroxysms of their malady, but of which no use has yet been made ; the plan of treatment, without coercion, having hitherto been found happily to succeed in the management of such patients, with whom the straight waistcoat is not required, since the new method of management, adopted by the Baron Pisani, has been found to answer much better for the furious class, even when subject to their violent accessions. This method consists in the use of a cradle of suspension, where the patient being well secured, to prevent him from falling or attempting to jump out, is gently rocked, or swung,

until sleep comes on, and, as it invariably happens, the patient afterwards becomes cool and composed.

All that part of the building, above described, is comprehended within the boundaries of one, which had fallen into decay, and has thus been rebuilt. We now proceed to give an account of the buildings which are entirely new, and adjoining to the other. By a second entrance, opposite to the outer gate, we come to a spacious court-yard, the surrounding walls of which are ornamented with very pleasing pictures, in fresco. Passing on to the right hand, there is a rectangular space, which is bounded on two sides by the new buildings, and on the sides opposite to these by iron gratings. The rooms, to the number of twenty, on the two sides of the new buildings, are appropriated for the habitation of the furious class of lunatics. In the middle of the court-yard there is a fountain, surrounded by a double row of umbrageous trees, with stone seats, at proper distances, and all so arranged as to render the place at once cool, pleasant, and refreshing. In the same order, on the left hand of the new buildings, are the apartments assigned for phrenetic patients. Besides these, there are two large saloons, in that part of the new which adjoins the old buildings; one of these is for the tranquil class of patients, and the other for the idiots. There is a garden adjoining this part of the premises, abounding with fruit and culinary vegetables, with a fountain in the midst, and a spacious tank, large enough for the men to exercise themselves in swimming. The abundant supply of water, the fertility of the soil, and the industrious labors of the insane people, have all contributed to the superb products of vegetation. At the lower part of the garden is a small Greek theatre, elegantly constructed, and is entirely the work of the insane. Over the porch is an inscription in Greek and Latin, in testimony thereof.

THE INSCRIPTION.

ΤΟΥΤΟ ΤΗΣ ΣΟΦΙΑΣ ΔΙΑΔΕΚΑΕΙΟΝ' ΟΙ ΑΦΡΟΝΕΣ
ΕΚΤΙΣΑΝ.

Within the theatre, the following is inscribed on the walls.

*Affabre quod mirum
Ab imperitis ipsisque Dementibus
Extractum
Anno 1829.*

We are not less disposed to admire the finished and perfect manner in which this edifice is erected, than the genius and design so happily conceived by the Baron Pisani—the simple style of the fabric being so suitable to the laborers employed. But the most interesting part of the subject remains to be described; namely, the physical and moral management employed so ingeniously, and with so much success, by the Baron, and by which means the cure of those maladies, hitherto generally considered to be incurable, is frequently effected.

The worthy Baron, being guided by the force of his own genius, and by the result of experience, which in a few years he knew how to acquire and mature to such a degree, that it might be imagined he had spent his life in the study and meditation of hospitals for, and the management

of, the insane, and such as are so afflicted, is accustomed to view these, in whatever degree or class they may belong, in every respect as children, and instead of the barbarous and rigorous treatment, so generally had recourse to, a mild and gentle system of management is adopted, with a certain portion of time to be employed in labor, with such occasional recreation as is requisite to the infirm state of the corporeal functions. But the moral means is still more important, in the plan of treatment pursued, with which many eminent physicians have concurred ; and amongst others, it is satisfactory to refer to the writings of Signor Raol Rochelle, who has observed, that " surveying the generality of these unhappy lunatics, I coincide entirely with the opinions of the Baron Pisani, and am a partizan for the moral mode of treatment, instead of the violent modes of coercion hitherto employed." With regard to the corporeal diseases to which the insane are subject, in common with those who are not afflicted with mental maladies, the Baron leaves the medical treatment of such diseases to the physicians.

That the effects of the moral system employed, at this establishment, correspond fully with the wise and beneficent views of its excellent founder, are fully corroborated by facts. Independent of the many lunatics, of both sexes, who have recovered, and reacquired the use of their rational faculties, of which they had been so miserably bereft, how consoling it is to humanity to observe those, in whom the mental disorganization admitted not the possibility of cure, rendered as comfortable as their state will admit, being protected and sheltered from the inclemencies of the seasons, supplied with a wholesome diet, and, when they may be subjected to the more violent accessions of their unhappy malady, are guarded from injuring themselves or others, and thus secured from the wretched lot to which so many in their state are exposed. And we cannot at the same time avoid reflecting, how many, suffering from indigence in society, would exchange their liberty, embittered with trouble and sorrow, for the condition of a maniac in the Royal Hospital for the Insane at Palermo ! The pleasant situation of the place, the continual sources of amusement and recreation, the kind and benign treatment, all concur, in a striking and remarkable degree, towards the cure of the insane, by diverting their minds from the train of thought which had produced the affliction. One of the most common symptoms, in every species of insanity, is undoubtedly watchfulness ; the daily occupations, and the other exercises of the body, in the manufactories and in the various improvements and embellishments of the hospital, are found to be attended with the most salutary effects in obviating this symptom, by inducing a certain degree of fatigue. Some people, in observing such a superfluity of ornaments, which appear to indicate luxury, and the labor that these must have cost, may be disposed to consider such labor misemployed ; but it has been found that the variety of amusements such occupations afford, is very conducive to the cure of the malady, so that these ornaments may be regarded in no other light than as the results of part of the plan of treatment which the Baron Pisani has pursued with so much success. It is therefore probable that these ornaments will go on increasing, until every angle of the buildings will present, to the curiosity of visitors, some eccentric or elaborate workmanship, by the hands of

industrious lunatics ; and besides this, the habits of industry and application, thus acquired, the worthy Baron has with much discernment turned to a profitable account, by increasing the resources of the establishment. Putting facts to the proof, by comparing the annual income, from its foundation, with the expenses disbursed for the maintenance of the insane, the value of the products of labor will be found very considerable, independent of the buildings, and improvements of the hospital itself.

On festival days, the amusements of music and dancing are substituted for labor, and these changes have been found also to concur to the happiest effects.

This plan of treatment, so efficacious and humane, for the cure of insanity, is a proof of the superior mind of him, under whose directions it has been carried into effect ; and although it would be very difficult to find such an estimable person to superintend similar establishments, the plan here described will be found more and more advantageous and satisfactory, as it is judiciously employed. The labors and ingenuity of the worthy Baron may thus, in some measure, be imitated ; but who, we may ask, will imitate the indefatigable constancy with which he has pursued his painful and arduous undertaking ? His zeal and anxiety for the great work he has created, instead of cooling or abating by time, goes on increasing, and exciting the admiration of those who know the nature of such duties and employments ; and we cannot be surprised at the sentiments expressed by particular friends, or the praises of his fellow citizens, as well as those of strangers residing amongst us, and travellers who have visited the establishment. Amongst others, the Duke of Buckingham, in a complimentary letter to the Baron, says, " The annals of your country will place your name in the rank of the illustrious Howard, and amongst the heroes of humanity, who are the finest ornaments in the history of the world." In May, 1832, when the Senhor Hunckler directed the attention of the Representative Council of Geneva upon the condition of the insane, the journal called the *Federal*, amongst other observations about this establishment, and its Director, says, " Although the internal management of the hospital merits the highest attention, that, however, which distinguishes this hospital particularly, are the means employed in the treatment of the insane—and above all, the laudable zeal with which the Baron Pisani has dedicated all his attention, and has fully merited to have his name enrolled amongst the benefactors of humanity." In June, 1832, Baron Ende, a distinguished personage in the service of the Court of Baden, addressed a letter, containing a most flattering eulogium, to the Baron Pisani.

When we observe the remarkable degree of neatness and cleanliness, which is so conspicuous in every part of the establishment, this might appear to be the effects of compulsion, and with a view to ostentation ; but the fact is otherwise, for by the good regulations adopted, cleanliness is become a kind of instinctive or natural feeling with the insane people, more so, even, than with those who are employed to superintend them, so that this part of their labor is quite voluntary.

Some years ago, it would have been difficult to have found in Sicily, or elsewhere, any public hospital or asylum for the reception of lunatics, which would have been visited without exciting very painful feelings in

those who possessed any sensibility for the evils and sufferings of their fellow creatures ; but we have now no hesitation to assert, that the most compassionate may visit this hospital, without having any painful impression, except such as may arise from natural sympathy, which must be at the same time mingled with satisfaction that such an establishment has been found, and such an excellent mode of treatment adopted, by which these evils of humanity are so efficaciously succored and diminished. We have had testimony to this effect, from the Marquis Gargallo, who in a letter to the Baron Pisani, published in the Scientific and Literary Ephemerides of Sicily, after having stated his constant and almost unconquerable aversion to visit such establishments, when he had entered this, said, that however predominant this feeling was, on his first entering the place, his satisfaction at being so agreeably undeceived was proportionally increased, even to admiration.

ADIPOSE LINT.—FUNCTION OF THE UTERUS, &c.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

SIR,—In answer to a query appended to a brief communication of mine in your valuable Journal, I would assure you that you did not *misread* the manuscript, and that I do not at once feel disposed to retract the use of certain terms. By *adipose* or *fatty lint*, however, I intended nothing more than a species of pessary made of lint, and an ointment suited to the abraded surface of the *labia*. The adhesion in the case mentioned in my communication, was certainly not formed by the *scarf skin*, but by the cellular texture of the *rete mucosum*. I trust that my own, and the future observation of others, will confirm the statement.

Whilst my pen is in hand, I would suggest a few thoughts which have arisen from reading the essay in your Journal on the use of the *Ung. Hydr. Fort. in Erysipelas*. The writer of that essay may have had sufficient experience to make still stronger assertions, but I am disposed to consider the remedy he proposes a very uncertain one. A diligent use of the *sugar of lead* (and none but a diligent use will answer the purpose), in which there is an *incessant evaporation* kept up, has scarcely ever failed of a cure. *Ice water* perhaps would do as well, the object being to bring about a *reduction of temperature*. The speediest remedy, however, is a *blister*, put upon the *advancing surface*, and the sound skin contiguous. The *sugar of lead* and the *blister* are considered preferable to the solution of *opium* recommended by Dr. Physick ; although a query arises whether the solution of opium does not operate by way of *evaporation*. The *ung. hydr. fort.* it is well known is not characterized by *evaporation*.

Before I close, at present, I would suggest to your numerous correspondents, whether there is not a sort of *peristaltic*, or *musculo-nervous* action, put on by the *vagina* and *uterus*, whereby the *semen* of the male is taken up from the *vagina* by the *uterus*. In two cases within my knowledge of *prolapsus uteri*, a pessary of *bark* was employed, and the *bark* found in the *uterus*, although the *pessaries* were only inserted in the *vagina*. I am persuaded, dear Sir, that the action alluded to exists,