ARTICLE V.

INSANITY AMONG THE COLORED POPULATION OF THE FREE STATES. *By E. JARVIS, M. D., Dorchester, Mass.*

An article in the last October number of the "*Journal of Insanity*" endeavors to show an extraordinary disproportion of insanity and idiocy among the colored people of the free States ; and having, apparently, proved this, by quoting the statements of the national census of 1840, the writer significantly asks, " Who would believe, without the fact in black and white before him, that *every fourteenth colored person in the State of Maine is an idiot or a lunatic ?*" Here was an important qualification—" without the fact." Fortunately, that condition of belief is still wanting.

That article is founded on the deductions drawn from the statements of the census of 1840, which seem to be irresistible facts. They are so recorded and published in that document, which was prepared by the officers of our Government, and states on its own title-page, that it is "Corrected at the Department of State," and "published by authority of an Act of Congress under the direction of the Secretary of State."

When this report first appeared in 1841, it attracted the attention of a great many naturalists, physicians, political economists and others, and among these was the writer of the article you published. Although the deductions were strange and unexpected, and almost incredible,

still they seemed undeniable, and tables, similar to that which your writer published in *The Observer*, were published in the several journals and newspapers, and in some of the lunatic hospital reports.

Soon, however, they appeared to be so contrary to all previous experience and observations, that some were led to examine into the character of the authority on which the tables were founded, and discovered that the whole of the statements in reference to the disorders of the colored race were a mere mass of error, and totally unworthy of credit.

The American Statistical Society, in 1845, first analyzed the census of 1840, and then prepared a long memorial to Congress. In their petition they set forth the errors, inconsistencies, contradictions and falsehoods of that document, and asked Congress to disavow the whole, and cause another and correct one to be prepared and published. This memorial was presented to both houses of Congress, and referred to separate committees in each. The Senate printed the petition, and it is now to be found in the Senate documents of that session. It was also printed in *Hunt's Merchant's Magazine*, of New-York, in February, 1845.

The *Philadelphia Journal of the Medical Sciences* also, in 1844, published a review of the census, in as far as it related to the insanity among the colored population, and refuted its statements as to this whole matter. A similar review and refutation was published in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, Nov. 30th, 1842. The Massachusetts Medical Society, in May, 1844, appointed a committee to inquire into the facts in regard to this matter in that State. This committee made a thorough investigation, and reported the results in 1845. Their report shows that no such diseased colored persons exist

in most of the towns and families where the census stated them to be. The Society published this report in their transactions for the year 1845.

The refutation was complete and satisfactory. The errors of the census, and the thorough groundlessness of the theory of the preponderant liability of the free African, or colored race, to insanity or defect of vision, hearing or voice, over the slave African, was demonstrated beyond all question. It was sent forth to the world through some of the leading journals of the country, channels so respectable, that it was, not unreasonably, hoped it would be quoted and republished co-extensively with the erroneous statement, and thus reach the eye and the conviction of all the people of the land, and set the falsehood forever at rest.

It is easy to refute these extraordinary and unphilosophical assertions of the census by counter and contradicting statements of the same document.

The marshals were directed to inquire of each family the age, employments, health, &c., of all its members. These officers were furnished with blank books or sheets, ruled and divided into seventy-four parallel and vertical columns, in which they were to record so many varieties of answers in respect to the people. When the work was finished, the deputy-marshals were obliged to take a copy of the record of their work, and deposit it in the office of the district clerk of the State to which they respectively belonged. In these clerk's offices these returns were condensed into towns and again copied. One copy was sent to Washington, and there the whole was digested and printed in the volumes which were distributed through the country.

In all these stages, in the primary record of each household, and the condition of his family, in the sheets of

the deputy marshals ; the same condensed into towns and counties in the clerks' offices ; and the digest of the whole in towns, counties, states, and the nation at Washington ; and, finally, the printed edition, there was the same form used—the seventy-four vertical and parallel columns, filled with the answers in respect to the people.

In the primary record, and in each succeeding transfer, there was a chance of error. The seventy-four columns were necessarily long and narrow, and the descriptive heading at the top was at a considerable distance from the place of entry of many of the items. It required much discipline, therefore, to follow with the eye any column from its title, at its head, to its place of entry below. There were ten columns appropriated to insanity or defects of sense in the white and the colored. It is easy to suppose, then, that one might mistake the proper column, and enter the colored for the white and the white for the colored. This mistake might have been made by the marshal when he made his first entry and when he copied his work ; again, it might have been made by the amanuensis at the clerk's office, and by the copyist, and the printer at Washington. There were two editions printed, one by Blair and Rives and the other by Thomas Allen. These were both liable to mistakes, and they might each commit a different error.

If all were perfectly correct, all these successive and coterminous copies would be exactly alike. They would contain the same identical facts, agreeing in the minutest particular. But we find, on examination and comparison, that so many and so various mistakes have been made by all these officials, from the first record to the last printed copy, that no two of them are exactly alike. Mathematically and specifically, they give as

many different versions of the same facts as there are reports. In some particulars, the original entry of the householders and families in Massachusetts tells one story, the condensed copy in the clerk's office at Boston tell's another story, the printed edition of Blair and Rives, at Washington, tells a third, and the edition of Thomas Allen gives a fourth variation of the same facts.

These errors of statement seem to be the greatest in regard to the insanity of the colored population of the northern states. Fortunately, besides the disagreements of the several copies of the reports with each other, the document itself furnishes its own refutation. One statement contradicts another statement and shows its error.

The original record made by the deputy-marshal of Worcester, Massachusetts, states that there were in the family of Samuel B. Woodward, in Worcester, one hundred and thirty three colored lunatics. But in another column or set of columns, he states that there were no colored persons at all in the said Samuel B. Woodward's family. Both of these assertions, that there were one hundred and thirty-three colored lunatics, and that there were no colored persons at all in Dr. Woodward's family, are copied into the record deposited in Boston, and these were incorporated into the condensed statement in respect to the town of Worcester, and they went through all the successive copies, and were both finally printed at Washington.

Another deputy-marshal states that there were four colored pauper lunatics and one colored blind person in the family of Jacob Cushman, in the town of Plympton, in Massachusetts, while in another set of columns he states that there were no colored persons at all in the family of Jacob Cushman. These contradictory state-

ments, also, were both copied and condensed and entered into the final printed report.

The original detailed report of the town of Pepperell, in Massachusetts, states that there were fifteen *white* lunatics in the family of Charles C. Parker. The copyist, in his abstract, first made these to be fifteen *blind*, when, perceiving his mistake, he drew his pen across this record, and then made them to be fifteen *colored* lunatics; and thus it stands in the clerk's office at Boston. But, finally, the printer at Washington made another change, and restored the original statement of fifteen white insane.

As the original record contained the name of every householder in whose family any lunatic was stated to exist, a way was open for inquiry at the source of the facts, to learn whether they were so or otherwise. In 1845, the Massachusetts Medical Society, by its members, made this inquiry in every family in the State, which were said, by the census, to have any colored lunatics, with the exception of three, which were said, by the census, to be in the towns of Carver and Swanzey. The result of their inquiries showed that there were only twenty persons during the whole of the year 1840, instead of one hundred and seventy-one persons stated in the marshal's manuscript records, or two hundred, as stated by the printed edition of Blair and Rives. The Medical Society ascertained these to have been in only eight towns, while the marshal's stated that they were in twenty-four towns, and Blair and Rives distributed them in thirty-eight towns. The original record of the marshals states that there were eighteen colored lunatics who were supported by their own estates or by their friends; the edition of Blair and Rives made these to be twenty-seven; and the inquiry made by the Medical Society in

Massachusetts found no such lunatics in the towns or families in which the record or the document reported them to be.

That many of these were merely errors of record, which placed the figures in the wrong column, is evident from the statement of the Medical Society committee,—“That many families which are recorded and reported as having *colored* insane, or blind, or deaf and dumb persons, were found not only to have no such persons, but had *white* insane, blind, deaf and dumb persons, who were not so recorded and reported.” So far as these go they diminish the numbers of the white lunatics, and increase the colored, as is remarkably seen in the mistake in regard to Dr. Woodward’s family, in the hospital at Worcester.

It would be easy here to quote the names of every family in the State of Massachusetts, which, according to the record of the marshals, contained colored insane, or blind, or deaf and dumb persons, and to designate which of these, according to the personal inquiries of the members of the Medical Society, contained none. But that will be unnecessary here, and those who wish to pursue the investigation more minutely in this direction are referred to the “Transactions of the Massachusetts Medical Society, for 1845,” appendix, p. 90 to 95. And if any doubts remain, it is hoped that the Medical Societies of other States will consult the records of the marshals deposited in the clerks’ offices of their respective districts, and see how far these agree with the printed document, and also make further inquiries into the families where these colored persons are said to be, and ascertain whether it were so or not in 1840.

It will now be sufficient to show the errors of the census in respect to lunacy by its own contradictory state-

ments, and thus convict it out of its own mouth. One page of the manuscript record of the marshals shows the number of colored persons of all ages in each family, and another page of the same record states the number of these colored persons who are insane, or blind, or deaf and dumb, in these several families. The condensed copies of these marshals' records in the district clerks' offices, and the printed editions of the census, contain similar statements of the whole number of colored persons, and the number of these who were diseased in mind, or deprived of vision, hearing and voice, in the respective towns, counties and States.

We have now only to compare these two statements, which we quote from Blair and Rives' printed edition of the sixth census of the United States.

TABLE showing the whole Colored Population, and the Colored Lunatics and Idiots in some of the Towns in the United States.

MAINE.					
	Total			Total	
	co.	po. co. lun.		col. po. co. lun.	
Dresden	3	6	Bradley	0	1
Biddeford	1	2	Dexter	0	1
Lymington*	0	2	Dixmount	0	1
Webster	0	2	Swanville	0	1
Hopet	1	2	Unity	0	1
Monmouth†	1	1	Alexander	0	1
Norway	0	6	Baring	0	1
Scarboro'	0	6	Calsais*	0	1
Newfield	0	5	Hartland	0	2
Dixfield	0	5	Madison	0	1
Limerick	0	4	Ripley	0	1
Peru	0	3	New Portland	0	1
St. Alban's	0	3		8	70
Industry	0	3			
Otisfield‡	0	2			
Danville	0	1			
Gilead	0	1			
Hebront	0	1			
Edgecomb	0	1			
Leeds	1	1			

* Has also 2 colored blind.

† Has also 1 deaf and dumb colored.

‡ Has also 2 colored deaf and dumb.

NEW HAMPSHIRE.

Haverhill	1	1
Campton	1	1
Holderness	0	2
Coventry	0	1
Atkinson	0	1

* Has also 1 blind and 1 deaf and dumb, colored.

[illegible]

Total			PENNSYLVANIA.		
	col.	po. co. lun.		col.	po. co. lun.
Perry	0	1	Plum	8	5
Liberty	0	1	West Providence*	7	3
Bloomfield	0	1	Centre	4	8
Greenfield	0	1	Harios	3	6
Chester	0	1	Bloomfield	2	3
Newbury	0	1	Jay	2	2
Plain	0	1	Upper Paxton	2	2
Jefferson, Franklin County	0	1	Washington, Erie County	0	4
Norwich	0	1	Le Boeuf	0	3
Brooklyn	0	1	Greenwood	0	2
Elk	0	1	Old Codorus	0	2
Lenox	0	2	Colebrookdale	0	2
Hanover	0	1	Logan	0	2
Munroe	0	1	Ridgebury	0	1
	—	—	Washington, Indiana Co.	0	1
	31	88	Little Beaver	0	1
INDIANA.			Oliver, Newport Borough	0	1
Centre	0	1	Lawrenceville	3	2
Marshall	1	2		—	—
Fulton	1	1		31	50
Noble	0	2			
Clay	0	2			
Clifty*	0	1			
Lawrence	0	1			
Perrysville	0	1			
	—	—			
	2	11			
ILLINOIS.					
Scott County	4	5			
Lasalle County	2	1			
Logan County	1	6			
Livingston County	2	1			
Wilmington, Greene Co.	0	5			
Christian County	0	3			
De Kalb County	0	2			
Taylor, Greene County	0	2			
S'th Richwoods, Greene Co.	0	1			
Marshall County	0	1			
Plainfield, Will County	0	1			
Council Hill, Jo. Davis Co.	0	1			
Town'p 6. N. I. E. Ful'n Co.	0	1			
East Fork	0	1			
Lyons	0	1			
	—	—			
	8	32			
* Has also 2 colored blind.					

As if this burden of mental disease, thus thrown by the national census upon this ill-starred race, were not sufficient for their endurance or our credulity, this document multiplies their defects of sight and hearing and of speech in a similar ratio, and presents a like dispropor-

tion of the deaf and dumb and the blind that it does of the insane among the colored inhabitants of the northern States.

We have not space to show, in detail, the errors of the census in regard to the defects of sense among these unfortunate people. Suffice it now and here to say, that on these points the national report manifests the same disregard of former statements of the numbers of the colored people as it does in its enumeration of the colored insane. But those who wish to pursue this investigation are referred to the document itself, where they can see and compare for themselves, and to the memorial of the American Statistical Association, printed among the Senate Documents for 1845, and in *Hunt's Merchant's Magazine*, for February, 1845, and also to the *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, Vol. VII., new series, where the whole matter is condensed and exhibited in a few pages.

The statements of the sixth census of the United States, in respect to the white lunatics, are not corroborated by other authorities. Wherever the numbers of these have been sought by the State governments, by societies, or by individuals, they have all come to very different conclusions from those of the national documents.

There are also manifold contradictions and disagreements between the different parts of that report in regard to other matters—employments, capital, education, &c., sufficient to throw a doubt over the credibility of the whole, and to cause men to hesitate in believing any of its statements, unless substantiated by collateral or extraneous evidence.

But our present purpose being only to disabuse our readers' minds of any suspicion that the colored popula-

tion of the free states are in any extraordinary degree liable to mental disorder, founded on the statements of the sixth national census—albeit it vaunts itself as “published under the direction of the Secretary of State,” and as “corrected at the Department of State,”—we have therefore been contented with mainly showing the palpable contradictions of the document itself.

Making such deductions from the numbers of the colored people said to be insane as the pages of the census itself admit must be made, the apparent number of these lunatics is very materially diminished, and the extraordinary disproportion of insanity in this race, in their free condition, vanishes.

Thus among the 94 colored lunatics and idiots said to be in Maine, 70 are stated to be in towns which have only 8 colored inhabitants. This, of course, deducts 62 from the 94, and leaves only a possibility of 32 in the State.

In New-Hampshire, 13 of the 19 colored insane are in towns which contain only 4 colored inhabitants. This reduces them to 10 at most.

The 79 colored lunatics, according to the census in Illinois, includes 32 in towns that have only 8 colored people in them. This reduces the utmost numbers to 55 in that State.

The 165 in Ohio include 88 which are distributed in towns that contain only 31 colored persons. Making the necessary deduction, this leaves only 108—two-thirds the number stated.

The 200 stated by the printed editions to be in Massachusetts must be reduced to 171, which the marshals recorded in their manuscript. These again must be diminished by 133 which are pretended to be found in Dr. Woodward's hospital, where the same record says there were no colored

people. Again, we must deduct 7, which is the excess of the number of cases of lunacy over the number of colored persons in the towns quoted in the table in this article. This leaves only 31 colored lunatics in the State, which is the utmost that can be believed to be there, according to a complete analysis of the census; and these are 15 more than the pauper returns showed to have been in the several towns in the State at the time.

These numerous statements of the cases of insanity in towns and families where there were no such persons to be disordered, will prepare us to doubt the other statements which assert that all, or almost all, or any large proportion of the colored inhabitants were lunatics.

It is not enough that we make the deductions above proposed, and then believe that all the colored people in many towns and counties, or that two thirds, or one half, or any considerable proportion of these persons in other towns, were insane. No man in his senses, at all conversant with diseases of the mind, will admit that the 32 cases of insanity in Maine, the 10 in New Hampshire, or the 108 in Ohio, which may, possibly, have subjects of disease, had in 1840 any certain existence. There is an extreme probability of an excess of statement here, as there was a certainty of it in the cases that we have been able to disprove. And we may fairly assume that the sixth census is not reliable authority in any matters of disease, and has furnished no ground for any opinion or theory as to the prevalence of lunacy or idiocy among the colored people of the northern States, nor of the liability of this race to mental disorder.

It has seemed somewhat remarkable that statements so glaringly false in themselves, so palpably contradictory to each other, so contrary to all common observations and experience, so unsupported by any analogies or

even theories, should have been so passively acquiesced in by the people of this country, and especially by the naturalists, the physicians and the statisticians of America. The Massachusetts Medical Society is the only association of physicians or naturalists that is known to us to have been so disturbed by these assertions as to pursue the inquiry into the same families, and ascertain them to be false. The American Statistical Association is the only philosophical, historical or statistical society that has inquired into it, and endeavored to set the matter right before the people.

The matter was brought to the attention of the Secretary of State, in 1845, by one of the oldest and ablest statesmen in the country. The Secretary admitted the errors pointed out to him, and yet he thought it not worth while to take any public action to remedy it. Still, the deductions drawn from these errors were adopted as grounds to sustain, to their extent, some measures of public nature. The subject was brought before both houses of Congress by able and influential members, and referred to committees in each body. But no further public action was taken, except that the Senate printed the memorial of the Statistical Association.

After all this indifference on the part of the public authorities who assumed the responsibility of this document, and the apathy and neglect on the part of the medical profession, who ought to know and look after these things, and who should jealously watch over the reports of science and natural history of our country, it is not strange that the people believed these new statements,—that newspaper writers, not familiar with nosological science, should repeat and publish these “startling facts,” and that the world should tremble at the very thought of

the overwhelming power of lunacy upon the colored race, when left to itself, in the free States of this Union.

The scientific world rested much of its hopes upon the sixth census, and anticipated great advantage and light from the investigations and discoveries in this hitherto untrodden field. It was thought that so extensive an inquiry would show the prevalence of several diseases and defects among several millions of people of different races, living in climates so various, and in conditions so opposite, as to indicate the comparative influence of these upon human health and power. But all such hopes were disappointed by a thorough examination of the document itself. There was such a want of competence and faithfulness on the part of some of those who prepared and published it, and its statements of some facts were so false, and its deductions so groundless, that, so far from advancing the cause of truth and knowledge and science, it has put a stumbling-block in their way and retarded their progress.

But it is now to be hoped that the seventh census, that of 1850, will not fail as did its predecessor. We have confidence that the public officers who have it in charge to analyze, digest and publish the returns of the marshals who enumerated the people in 1850, will bring to their work such competence, intelligence and faithfulness as will prevent the repetition of the errors of the former report, and that they will produce such a document as will command the confidence of all men—such a one as the government can honestly offer to the people, and such as we shall not be ashamed to present to foreign nations.