

By F. R. Newell.

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On the Treatment of the Insane.

Mr. President.

In reporting upon the condition of the Insane, and the provision made for that truly unfortunate class of human beings I feel that I am engaged upon one of the most important and interesting subjects of Christian Philanthropy. I say Christian Philanthropy, for before the light of the "sun of righteousness" beamed upon the world, the heart of humanity felt throbbled in view of the sufferings of human nature.

At the dawn of Christianity the night of superstition and the mists of ignorance gradually fled away. Its light first tinged the hill-tops — and as it gradually ascended, its beams shone into the valleys and secluded spots. Wherever its genial influences have been felt, there has man's condition been ameliorated. The angel song of "good will to men" has, to a great degree been realized. Look over the face of the earth and mark the impress of the Gospel. — The age of miracles seems scarcely to have passed. — Sighing and suffering flee before it. — Monks and heretics by its power penetrate the night of Heathenism and illumine its darkness. — The islands of the sea feel its influences.

But for no portion of the human family has christianity done more, than for that unfortunate class, the Insane. Jesus found them outcasts from the society of the living—dwellers in the caves and tombs of the dead, emblematical of the opinion in regard to them. No longer fit companions for the living, they were cast out to dwell with the dead. Through christianity is the cause of all the changes in man's condition, and most emphatically so, as it regards the insane; yet it was long after its light broke upon the hills of Palestine before it sufficiently penetrated the heart of man, to induce him to make the needed provision for his demented brother. Long years were the insane sufferers "passed by" on the other side.— Many died of their wounds because there was no "Samaritan" to "pour in oil and wine."

But "a brighter day dawned upon these poor sufferers.— These outcasts from society and friends, they were again to be considered as members of the human family. Christianity having more thoroughly imbedded the heart of humanity, it beat in sympathy for these also.— Philanthropy extended its hand to care for, if not to cure them.

In passing to consider more particularly the provisions made for the Insane, it is perhaps now

necessary to remark, that to this day, in heathen countries, no provision is made for them, other than that which is made for criminals & animals, being wholly deprived of the kind offices of compassion and tenderness.

In Europe, it is of comparatively recent date, that the insane have received the attention, which the dreadful disease required. Their condition was attended with awful barbarity, and the atrocious manner in which they were treated the mind recoils from with horror. In England, at an early day they were confined in Asylums as places for their safe-keeping, just as the tameless animal is caged, not for its own good, but for the protection of those whom it may injure.

Previous to the Revolution in France they were placed in Monasteries as places of safety and security. Neither in France or England had the idea of curing the insane been entertained. Asylums and Monasteries were resorted to, that society might be relieved of the trouble and protected from the injury of such persons. In these places, they could be locked up, loaded into chains, or immured in cells as the case required.

But a ray of heavenly light burst upon this unfortunate class of sufferers, when in 1792, the illustrious Pinel, in France, who upon being appointed directing physician at the Insane Hospital at Bicetre, was.

so shocked at the treatment which the patients received, as to at once devise and carry into effect a totally different system. His generous heart melted at the sight of so many human beings, who for no crime but that of being bereft of reason, were loaded with chains and incarcerated in cells. — He felt that, even these miserable beings could be touched and influenced by kindness. — That the mighty power of love could bind them with more security than links of iron.

In the face of opposition, contrary to the roarings of those who had been the keepers of these victims of cruelty and oppression, — with a boldness which nothing but a conviction of the right can impart, he entered the cells of the most furious and "unloosed the captive and let the prisoner go free. In one day, he thus liberated 80 of the patients; many of whom was considered the most dangerous. The first one he took the chains from had been confined 40 years, and had killed one of his keepers. The poor man had been so long bound that it was with difficulty that he could walk. In a quarter of an hour, he succeeded in maintaining his balance and with tottering steps came to the door of his cell — His first look was at the sky at the sight of which, he exclaimed, "How beautiful!" Ecstatic with joy he spent the first day, and during

the two succeeding years of his stay, his paroxysms did not return. The manifestations of joy and gratitude by those whom Pinel thus liberated were such as is seldom witnessed.

About the same time, Samuel Tuke in England, commenced a career of humanity towards the Insane, the influence of which will never cease to be felt. It was not however till after the year 1815. that in England the insane were disenthralled from their sense than iron bondage. In Pinel and Tuke, arose stars not meteor-like, but fixed and enduring. — by their light was the darkness which hung over the condition of the insane illuminated. — wherever in Europe or America their condition has been ameliorated — wherever tenderness and compassion have taken the place of brute force — the influence of their example has not only pointed the way, but inspired confidence in the results.

At the present time, in Europe, private Asylums, with all the comforts of home, — with every thing which art and refinement can produce, are provided for the insane among the wealthy. For those among the poorer classes, institutions, endowed either by government, or by wealthy individuals are provided, in which neither pains nor expense is spared, by which cures may be effected, and the incurable made comfortable.

The public Hospitals of England, France, and Germany are glorious specimens of what humanity will accomplish when fully aroused to the sufferings of mankind. In our own country, even previous to the time of Pinel in France, attention had been given to the wants of the insane. In 1786 Dr Rush published his famous essay upon the subject. Since then, there has been a gradual improvement in the condition and treatment of the insane.

The movement in Europe very naturally affected this country. At an early day an institution was established in Philadelphia, the first of the kind in the country; it was established by that great philanthropist Wm Penn. — The particulars concerning this hospital I was not able to learn.

But in no part of the U.S. has there been so much done to rescue the insane from misery, as in New England. Massachusetts has been the pioneer in this great work, having done more than any other state in the Union.

Previously to 1818, though there many private asylums, in which much was done for the insane, yet in this year the first public institution in Massachusetts was established. This was the McLean Asylum at Charlestown. (now Somerville) It commenced amid doubts and discouragements,

many believing it a wild and visionary scheme, many medical men, even, believing that insanity was incurable. It was considered an experiment but proved an experiment of entire success and became the pioneer to similar institutions. It was endowed by private donations and by the government of the state.

In 1830 Massachusetts established another institution, the first of the kind in the country, a hospital for the insane poor. Its plan was conceived in the spirit of true philanthropy. Its object was to provide for lunatics who had hitherto received only the apology for care in almshouses, jails and prisons. A large number of such persons existed in the state, and by this step the state fulfilled an obligation which it owed to these, its suffering children. This hospital is situated in the town of Worcester. In 1833, the Governor issued a proclamation, to the effect, that all insane and idiotic persons confined in almshouses, jails and prisons should be removed to the place provided by the state.

This proclamation bespoke the consummation of a plan on which it is delightful to dwell. A plan, the object of which was to rescue from misery and degradation a large class of sufferers. Follow that proclamation as it went from town to town, from village to village, proclaiming liberty

to the captive, and freedom to the oppressed. — See that company as they escape from the cold and dreary sheds attached to the almshouses — as they come up from damp and pestilential cells, — as their filth and rags, — many of whom had not seen the light of day for years, — see them as they wind their way from the lowest depths of neglect to that cheerful, comfortable home which their brethren had prepared for them.

This institution is justly styled the "model institution," and since its establishment, six of the states of the Union have adopted its plan. In 20 states has the attention of the people been directed to the condition of the insane. The meagreness of my resources for information in regard to other states prevents my giving any particular information in regard to them.

I may state however, that the deliberations upon this subject in most of the states is characterized by the same kindness and interest in behalf of this unfortunate class of individuals which gave rise to the establishments we have been considering.

The time has passed in this country, in which the insane will be treated either as criminals or as animals. The high standard of the European hospitals is nearly, if not quite attained in this country.

I pass now to consider a topic to which I

have already alluded. I refer to the Treatment of the Insane. And under this head I may speak of the Buildings and their accommodations, as they are very particular items, though not the most important. The buildings are mostly of brick or stone - costly, elegant and fine in their appearance. Provided with everything for comfort and convenience - everything which would gratify the taste of the most refined. Those which I have seen have been indeed "beautiful for situation"; their locations being on delightful eminences, commanding views of the neighboring country to a great distance.

The hospital in Maine, is situated in Augusta on the bank of the Kennebec river commanding a view of the beautiful country for many miles. So also are the hospitals of Mass. beautifully situated. The McLean Asylum, though within two miles of Boston has yet the fresh air of the country, being situated on an elevation commanding a view of the cities of Boston, Roxbury and Cambridge. The Worcester Asylum also is situated on a beautiful hill commanding a view of the neighboring country for many miles. It is built of brick - consists of a central Building and two wings. The central Building is 76 feet long by 40 wide, and four stories in height. The wings are each 90 feet long by 36 feet wide and three stories high.

Judging from the reports of the hospitals of other states, and the action of those states which are about establishing them, the same motives govern all. A delightful location is the first thing sought, to which is added everything which can please or divert the mind. To all there is connected more or less land, and with some a farm of considerable size on which the patients labor; an occupation congenial to the human mind.

The females are provided with employment suited to their tastes, the cultivation and tending of flowers and plants. One opening flower will often times quiet the troubled mind, and call forth those tender emotions of the heart, which in the strangeness of insecurity are withheld from the dearest friends. It would almost seem that the same had gone to the other extreme, from dire neglect to superfluity of attention.

But I would more particularly consider the government of those whom a few years ago it was thought necessary to confine in dungeons and load with chains. As before remarked Pinel in France and Juke in England discovered the true method such persons. — by love and kindness. In all the hospitals of the present day it is this which has wrought the change. Most of those who were the first inmates of the Worcester Asylum had been

confined in cells as dangerous persons. Chained and manacled they were carried there, but when they entered the establishment, its different atmosphere quieted them. Many of the most become calm and as manageable as a gentle child. A striking exemplification of the effect of the treatment of the insane at Worcester came under my own knowledge. A man who was in such a raging condition as for a time to put to defiance the power of man, was at last overpowered, chained and carried to the Hospital. When Dr. Woodcock received him, he offered him his hand and in tones of kindness said, "take off those chains, we have no use for them here - the storm in the man's breast, like that on Galilee sea, at the words of Jesus subsided at once, and melted into tears he said to the Dr. you are the first gentleman that I have seen." From that time, he who had snapped in sundry cords, and broken bolts became perfectly manageable. At the Mo Sean Boylan there was an instance in which the haughty spirit of a proud and arrogant woman was entirely subdued, when her fury was about to return, the skilful matron threw her arms about her neck and saluted her with a kiss - it was entirely effectual - the woman yielded at once - her stubborn will was broken.

These instances illustrate the principles of the government in the hospitals. Within the first nine years of the establishment at Worcester 1354 lunatics were received. Of this number many had been in cages and cells — some had been in bondage 40 years — some had been neglected to such a degree that the accounts seem to be true — 100 looked upon all with equanimity — 40 had stripped themselves of their clothing, even in the severity of winter. Yet during the period of nine years not a blow was struck — not a chain used, nor a harsh word spoken.

— What a lesson of the power of love and kindness! Beings in whom the spark of heaven's fire was well nigh extinguished quieted and calmed by a kind look and a word of sympathy. — the raging sea of passion smoothed by a kiss!

There are, however, restraints placed upon some of the patients, but of very rare occurrence. In one of Dr Woodard's Reports it is said, that "out of 230 insane persons, but one individual, either man or woman, has any restraint upon his or her person whatever." In the selection of attendants to administer this government, those are selected who are firm yet gentle — persons of cultivated minds and strict morality. In the report just allu-

ded to, these 230, persons in connection with those who have the care of them are spoken of as "one industrious family, all busy, all having something to do, and all feeling that they were adding to the general stock of good."

"Order is heaven's first law, — Order is the law for these poor creatures, who were so long supposed to know no law. In addition to this first law of heaven, those who have the management of them in mind have adopted that other law of heaven — the law of love, and uniting the two govern them without reason even better than those who are in possession of reason govern themselves.

The government of the Hospital permits or rather requires amusements of various kinds — riding, walking, dancing, social parties &c. Connected with the hospital are libraries for the use of the patients. Labor also both mechanical and agricultural by the males is required for the females appropriate employment, in all cases adapted to previous habits, is provided. Thus the mind is directed, occupied and prevented from dwelling upon those phantoms which idleness gives birth to. In speaking of the importance of employment in another point of view the Report of the Worcester Asylum for 1845 says, One patient after getting over his excitement continued his labor until he paid all his bills at the Hospital and had money left

sufficient to bear his expenses home - Another paid a large share of his expenses, recovered from a deep melancholy and returned home cheerful and happy.

One other topic which comes under this head, and which though mentioned last is by no means least, is the religious services. To extract again from the Report last alluded to Dr. Wood-aid says, ten years ago it was the general impression that religious influence was of doubtful utility to the insane. Not an institution in this country had devotional exercises or stated religious worship on the Sabbath. When the chapel connected with this Hospital was in contemplation, a contract was made for a building large enough only for about 100 persons. At a subsequent meeting of the commissioners I presented every consideration to induce them to enlarge the plan. It was considered perfectly absurd by most of the Board. A friend joined me and a chapel sufficiently large to accommodate 250 persons was erected. On the day of the dedication 120 patients were present. This was the first religious meeting ever held here. Since that time the chapel has been enlarged and will seat from 3 to 400 persons. Thus were religious services introduced into

Hospitals in this country. The patients listen with devout attention, and even those whom it is difficult to control at other times, will preserve the utmost calmness during the whole service. The choir is composed of the patients and the music, both instrumental and vocal is pronounced excellent.

The Bibles are put into the hands of the insane with almost universal benefit. The Report of Dr Woodard for 1845. says "The insane man who reviews religion and consults his Bible has more self respect, more control over his feelings, more love of order and truth, and is a better patient than the one who is ignorant of the law of love given on the sacred pages. A violent maniac in periods of his excitement will break over all bounds of propriety in his language and conduct, but when the excitement begins to subside the benign precepts of the Gospel again have an influence over him and aid him to enforce self respect and gain the mastery over his feelings.

I have now Mr President in a cursory manner noticed the condition of the Insane and the provision made for them. That I have not been more minute is owing to a want of materials. The subject covered a broad field, in which I have endeavored to pluck a few flowers more fragrant than the rest. Anything which has the sweet fra-

season of Christianity, which shows that its spirit is taking possession of the hearts of mankind we dwell upon with pleasure.

The past history of the Insane is filled with horror from which the mind recoils. But the future is full of hope. Through the influences of Christianity the victims of insanity have been transferred from the abodes of filth and wretchedness, to those of cleanliness and comfort — from chains and dungeons to liberty and the pleasant light of day — the broken links in the family circle have been reunited — the effaced likeness and the marred image of the Creator restored, and joy and gladness have been coined to the hearts of thousands.

Dreadful indeed is that malady which detaches reason and makes a wreck of that which makes the distinction between man and the brute, which extinguishes the spark of heavenly fire placed in man by his Creator. Insanity is a disease from which we instinctively shrink. To be afflicted with a disease which places us in subjection to our fears — which deprives us of the control of ourselves, — changes those whom we love dearest on earth into an iron fist, and drives us to despair we cannot contemplate but with feelings of dread.

In the unfinished lines of the poet
There is something which I dread;
It is a dark, a fearful thing;

It steals along with withering tread,
Or sweeps on wild destruction's wing.

Heat thought comes o'er me in the hour
Of grief, of sickness, or of sadness;
'Tis not the dread of death, — 'tis more, —
It is the dread of madness.

Oh! may these throbbing pulse pass,
Forgetful of their feverish course;
May this hot brain, which feverish glows
With all a fiery sulphurous fire,

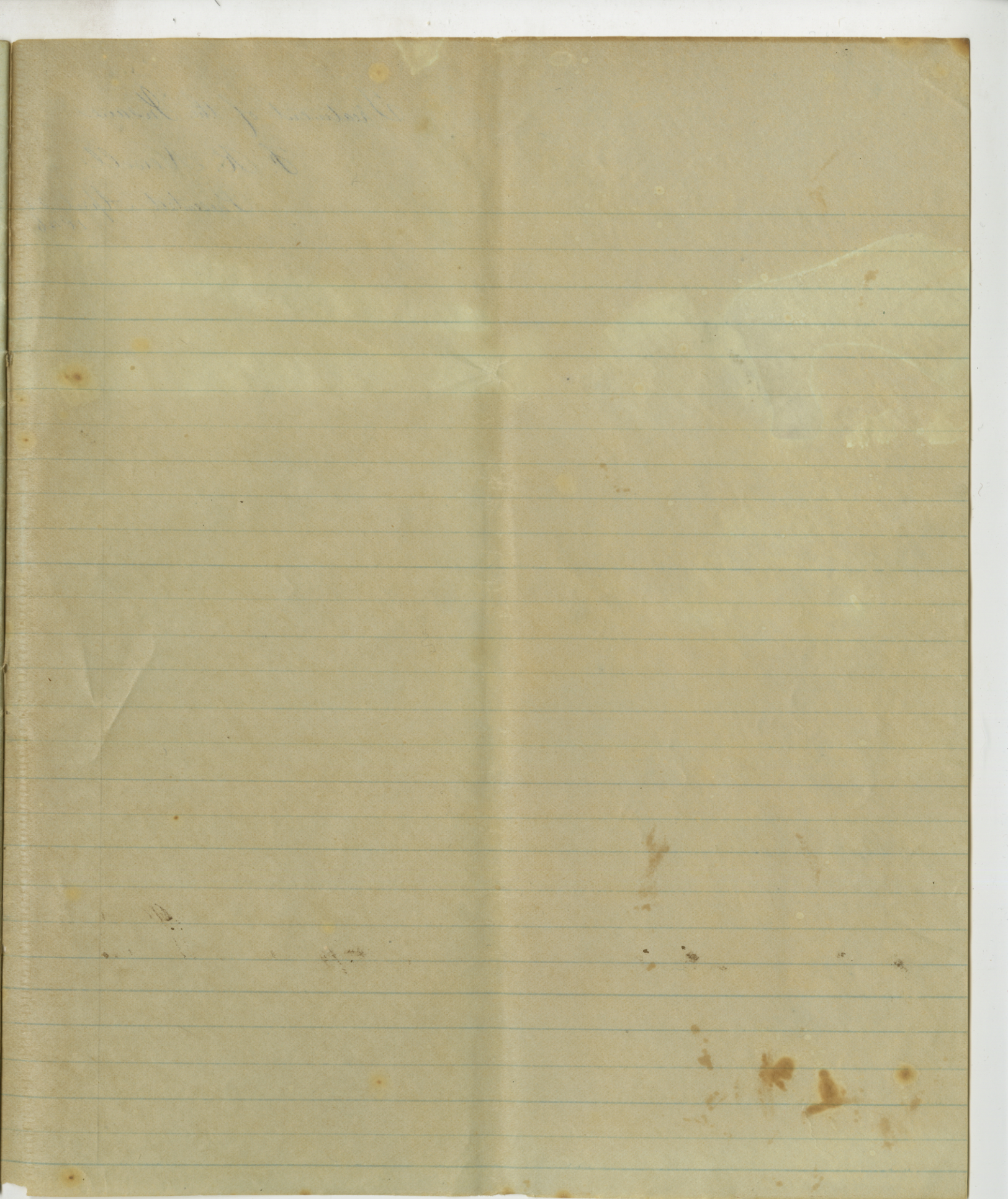
Be cold, and motionless, and still,
A tenant of the lonely bed;

But let not dark delirium steal —

Who could finish the picture? To imagine ourselves the victims of madness, is too dark a picture for the mind to dwell upon, nor need we wonder that the poet's pen ceased before it finished its task. — But who is safe? "Dark delirium may steal over our minds from causes least suspected. — This heap of a thousand strings may be rusting. In the last Report of Dr Woodard he says, "In the progress of civilization with all its attendant blessings, we have as yet to mourn over the fact, that so far from a diminution of insanity, there has been an alarming increase. Insanity is now in a

savage state of society. One reason for this disparity undoubtedly is, the substitution of the luxurious and artificial for the more simple and natural modes of life. Another and a more important one is, that among the ignorant and uncultivated the mental faculties lie dormant; and hence are less liable to derangement.

While then we may be exempt from the common lot of humanity — while our reason from some cause, may faintly glimmer in the socket — as the storms of madness may toss us on its merciless waves let us feel grateful for the noble, generous provisions which have been made. — Let our hearts swell with gratitude to God who sent a religion into the world which taught man thus to provide for his demented brother. — Should we become victims to this horrible disease, let us be thankful that instead of neglect and misery, chains and dungeons, we shall be watched over and soothed by those twin spirits Love and Kindness — daughters of Christianity — whose birth place is heaven.



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F. R. Newell

Presented April 21
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