

The Care of the Insane.*

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I feel that it is a great honour to be called upon to address the International Congress of Nurses, and it is becoming, in my opinion, and consistent with modern views, that this Congress should devote a special sitting to the care of the insane, for in no department of medicine has progress, during the Victorian Era, been more active and real—indeed revolutionary would not be too strong a term to use—than in the treatment of insanity. The history of this improvement has been the history of nursing, and it would be no exaggeration to state that the confidence in institutions for the insane which is enjoyed to-day is directly due to a better and to a greater knowledge of the nurse's duties, to skill in applying these, and to the sympathy and disposition to treat those suffering from mental infirmity with tenderness which nurses themselves have imparted to their work.

The gratitude of mankind is due in no small degree to the high minded, self-denying, and philanthropic devotion of Pinel, who, in 1792, was the originator of the so-called "non-restraint" system in the care of the insane, and France will ever rank as the first country to accept and advocate the enlightened treatment which is the boast of medical psychology to-day. It was the great Pinel who stimulated the mind of his receptive pupil, Esquirol, whose classic work remains even to this day an appreciated text book and a tribute to the teacher. It was Pinel also who, by his personal influence and teaching, animated and roused Heinroth to follow his lead in Germany, where the work of Grissinger also will ever be honoured and his memory perpetuated. We owe much also to the United States of America for strenuous advocacy of the cause of the insane. The great names of Drs. Rush, Woodward, and Bell (who issued special directions for the guidance of attendants upon the insane), of Brigham, Curwen, Howe, and Isaac Ray—who himself also issued a handbook for attendants and nurses—are those which will always receive universal acknowledgment; and no less honoured is the great name of Miss Dix, who consecrated the best years of her life to the cause of the insane, and to whose exertions and self-denying devotion some of the best institutions for the mentally afflicted in America owe their origin. The

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roll of fame in an international record is not complete without the names of Guislain in Belgium and Schroeder van der Kolk in Holland, whilst Italy and Spain are to-day in the forefront with scientific investigators into the pathology of nervous diseases and insanity.

In our own country, simultaneously with the teaching of Pinel in France, William and Samuel Tuke at York were advocating the "quality of being human," and urging the like sympathetic personal treatment of insanity. It is interesting to note that the transformation from a recital of prejudice, suspicion, superstition, and castigation in the treatment of insanity to the considerate, humane, and scientific treatment of to-day is a record of only a little over 100 years. Until then the theory of insanity was based upon demoniacal possession, and its practice was strictly in accordance with this theory—a practice of barbarous inhumanity, and such treatment was naturally supported by the full authority of the Church, which encouraged any method severe enough to exercise the Evil One, the acknowledged cause of the so-called "Devil's sickness."

It is satisfactory to note that the treatment advocated by the Tukes at York received sanction and support at the Lincoln Asylum under Dr. Charlesworth, and also at Hanwell under Dr. Conolly; and the London County Council, which is to-day charged with the administration of the Hanwell Asylum, and which invites members of this Congress to inspect one of its most modern asylums at Claybury, deserves recognition for its special and watchful care of the insane in London, a care which may without prejudice be described as the conquest of ignorance, superstition, and cruelty by science and humanity, and one strictly upholding the teaching of Pinel and Tuke in maintaining and enforcing a humane and sympathetic personal attendance. Probably the great initial incentive to, and the mainspring of, the present improved nursing in our asylums for the insane dates back to the influence and example of Florence Nightingale. It was she, of endearing and affectionate devotion—and may she long live to see her work extended—who demonstrated to the world that nursing was essentially woman's work, and fortunately for humanity the inspiration aroused by her devotion has been keenly and strenuously imitated in every country within the last fifty years. It is only since her noble efforts to relieve distress that any serious attempt has been made to educate attendants and nurses in our hospitals and asylums. When Miss Nightingale went to Kaiserswerth, in Germany, in 1849, to extend her knowledge of nursing the

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)