



## LIVE THINKER.

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## The Abuses of Insane Asylums.

If there is one abuse in this country more than another which cries for redress, it is the shameful imprisonment of sane persons in the insane asylums.

It has become an easy matter to have a person committed to the gloomy walls, and when once incarcerated, escape is difficult, if not impossible.

The heads of asylums are irresponsible despots, controlling the Managing Board.

The strenuous efforts to prevent investigation indicate that there is something concealed, and this is why visitors find so much difficulty in seeing the inmates, or even in gaining admittance at all.

This conclusion also explains the determined efforts of the managers to prevent the State Board of Charities and other authorities from inspecting these institutions.

These abuses had grown to such proportions that it became necessary in New York to form a

LUNACY LAW REFORM LEAGUE, and fortunately it was officered with zealous, working men, who could not be turned aside by persuasion or bribes.

In the report of the Vice President, Albert Booh, he says that already two perfectly sane persons have been found confined and released, and several other cases are under consideration.

The League is now able to show that the inmates are not allowed to see or converse with the State Lunacy Commissioners.

The managers habitually violate the United States postal laws, by opening and reading letters sent by them or to them, and suppressing such letters at will.

False statements are habitually made to visitors and friends, and under such cover sane persons are kept confined; after recovery inmates are detained in violation of law.

The inmates are frequently overcrowded, several persons sleeping in the same room, the harmless with the violent, the filthy and criminal with the innocent and cleanly.

The keepers are often drunk, and strike and abuse the patients.

The young physicians in charge resort to hypodermic injections or sedatives as punishment, to the ruin of the health of the patients.

There is carelessness in keeping the rooms in sanitary condition.

Often in winter the temperature falls to 40 degrees, and the sufferings of the patient is great.

Such are the most salient charges, among many others brought by the Commission.

Altogether enough to brand the management with infamy and show that the institutions are more merciless in the tortures inflicted than the Inquisition.

As conducted, the asylum is a menace to the liberty of every person, and patients are subjected to brutalities which are indescribable.

The abuses are by no means confined to the asylums of New York. They are inherent in the system of management of nearly all, and there is necessity of a League in every State.

In Illinois there is plenty of work for such an organization. There are many cases that ought to be looked after.

There is probably not an Asylum for the insane in this country but has one or more perfectly sane persons confined within its walls.

They were placed there by professed friends, or by enemies, and once incarcerated escape is nearly as hopeless as that of a life-convict in the penitentiary.

These enemies are watchful of every attempt made towards liberation, and understanding the necessary measures, close the opening doors in the faces of those attempting to escape.

It is true that the revelations these persons could and would make would be far from pleasant to interested parties, especially in regard to those who were the means of their confinement.

They probably would unfold a tale that would blast the names of those who remorselessly sought to bury them from the world, and now stand guard, in mortal fear that they may be liberated, and tell the story of their wrongs.

Take, for example, Pike, who, in an insane fit of jealousy, shot S. S. Jones, the former editor of the *Indian-Philosophical Journal*.

A dozen or more years have passed since that terrible tragedy, during which time Pike has been confined in the Elgin asylum.

To-day Mr. Pike is perfectly sane, gives the institution no trouble whatever, and there is no good reason why he should be retained there any longer.

In a communication written through that excellent medium Mrs. O. A. Bishop, 70 South Peoria street, Mr. Jones says:

"I have no objection to Mr. Jones being set free, but I believe him to have been disordered in brain and wholly unaccountable for his acts at that time. He is extremely nervous, and who knows? I do not believe he would again commit an act of violence."

I could have objections to his immediate release.

These are the words that would naturally come from Mr. Jones. As a spirit he is generous, kind and forgiving, entertaining no feelings of ill-will against the unfortunate man, and justice as mercy demands Mr. Pike's release.

The December Arena comes freighted to the guard with able thoughts on living issues and a rich supply of lighter material.

It being the Christmas number, the editor gives an additional sixteen pages to the body of the magazine, making one hundred and forty-four pages.

This enables him to give in addition to the usual essays on serious subjects, a thrillingly exciting full-page portrait of eminent thinkers.

This it appeals to the interest of every member of the family, and is unquestionably read by thousands of persons who, were it not for these popular features, would not be attracted to its pages.

## A Very Daring Admonition.

A clergyman in a suburban city, in laboring to account for the small attendance of men upon church service and the fact that the greater part of the labor required to keep up the organization was performed by women, was reported in a city paper to have said:

"Men are becoming more indifferent to the work of religion and to the work of the church, and are neglecting their duties of life. The women take charge of all the missionary societies, while the men stay home and read the newspapers; the girl goes with her mother to church, and her brother goes down town to buy trousers, and to work and scheme to support the church, while the men, who have the money in their pockets, and can afford to give liberally, sit by indifferently."

The duties of men bring them in daily contact with the world, and the superstitious teachings of childhood soon give place to reason.

It is then only one step further to an almost entire repudiation of the claims of the church.

Woman, confined to home, with little leisure for independent thought, rarely escapes from the treadmill which binds her in youth.

She loves the old order of things, and is reluctant to make a new departure, fearful of serious consequences.

The hope of the church is in the mothers of the new generation. And this is the secret of the constant struggle to enlist the girls in its service.

If the clergy would attract men to their lectures, let them cease to teach doctrines that are a disgrace to humanity, let them relegate hell and its fiery kings to the realm of romance.

Let them sweep away the whole brood of fables that had their origin in imagination, including an angry God, original sin, total depravity and vicarious atonement.

Instead of drawing their illustrations from old Jewish legends, let them teach natural law and scientific facts.

Instead of building palatial churches for lordlings to worship in, let them imitate the great Grecian teachers of a thinking age, and invite the throngs to the groves, "God's temples," where the sunbeams and verdure and bloom, and the smiling stretch of Nature's choristers, they can become familiar with all the great processes which relate to motion and organized life.

It is the silly teachings of the pulpit which have made the man of thought from the "house of God." Give him the same opportunities for enlarged knowledge with men; let them become familiar with mechanics and the sciences, with freedom to exchange advanced ideas with each other on sacred and all subjects, as is common to men; then, instead of condemning them for not themselves on having the sympathy and support of women, they would be left alone with the children, which wise parents would soon withdraw from their pernicious influence.

A Terrible Retribution.

According to the dispatches, fifteen years' imprisonment in Clinton jail was the sentence passed Nov. 14 on Rev. Henry W. George, ex-pastor of the Reformed church at Leeds, N. Y., who had been convicted of manslaughter in causing the death of Lotta Townsend in January last.

The trial of Dr. Erway, who, at the instigation of the preacher, performed the original operation which resulted in the girl's death, is expected to begin in a few days.

Parson George was in a singularly apathetic mood as he sat listening to the closing speeches.

The nervousness that characterized his conduct during the first part of his trial was gone.

It even seemed as if some of the angry lines, which have been coming out in his face were toned down, and as he glanced benignly at the jury and around the court-room he fully looked the parson. His clothes had been spruced up, and there was almost an air of cheerfulness about him.

From his seat within the bar he could look through the colonnade into the court, and to Christ's Church, not fifty feet from the pulpit in which he had preached his first sermon in Catskill.

His Honor asked the prisoner if he had anything to say. The ex-parson arose and in a few words reiterated his claim that he had been wronged, and with the wish of the girl in procuring an abortion.

He acknowledged having been intimate with Lotta. Judge Sanderson then sentenced him to fifteen years' imprisonment at hard labor.

A terrible retribution has at last fallen on this minister. (First seduction; then an abortion; and now, death.)

The tragedy is the latest of a long series of misdeeds which have made the name of Christ's Church, not fifty feet from the pulpit in which he had preached his first sermon in Catskill.

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