

All the injurious influences which militate against the restoration or the comfort of the insane, combined, certainly fall short, in their adverse results, of this single one; and yet no amount of earnest remonstrance or discussion, no recital of past observed evil, or even disastrous results, suffices to induce these visitors from their infatuated purpose. Of all persons living, none have more cause than the insane to pray: "Save us from our friends." Perhaps no fact, connected with insanity, is better known to the medical profession than that of the expediency, if not the general indispensability, of separating the insane from all former associates, and especially from their immediate relatives; and thus to break up that network of morbid mental operations, the threads of which have, almost invariably, been drawn from domestic materials; nor can this separation ever be safely interrupted before the complete dissipation of their delusions, and the establishment of a sure convalescence.

No position in which a patient can be placed can be more conducive to this end than that of asylum residence. All his surroundings here are the reverse of preceding ones. He is freed from a multitude of real or fancied annoyances, which ignorant officiousness had continuously repeated; and free scope is given to him for the utterance of his most cherished delusions. He is heard without contradiction, and replied to by those in charge of him with deference. He is not long in discovering that his intellectual powers are not so weak as his friends, at home, would have him to believe. He advantageously measures himself against associate dethroned minds; and he soon begins to sound the infirmities of his companions. At home he was constantly worsted in argument, and his feelings were embittered, not by the consciousness of defeat, but by the refusal of his antagonists to admit his victory. Among his mental peers and distant inferiors, he speedily learns to feel his own importance, and suffers no disturbance of his self-complacency. Continuous observance of the errors and delusions of others finally awakens the suspicion of his own aberration; and, doubt on this question once established, half the cure has been accomplished. How different the agencies by which, at home, this object had been essayed!

But the friends, instead of correctly apprehending the real curative influences of insane institutions, regard with utter horror the very peculiarities which most efficiently contribute to mental restoration. The treatment of insanity, in their estimation, consists in certain mystical appliances, known only to the initiated. They never dream of the curative efficacy of nothing-doing; they never suppose that nature possesses self-recuperative power. Nature, in their belief, is an old blind