

Dr. Haslam remarks, that "a successful examination of an insane person is not to be effected by directly selecting the subject of his delusion, for he will immediately perceive the object of such inquiries, and endeavour to evade or pretend to discover them; the purpose is more effectually answered by leading him to the origin of the distemper, and tracing the consecutive series of his actions; and the association of ideas in going over the road where he has stumbled he will infallibly trip again."

The power of concealing delusions, which confessed and even dangerous lunatics have been known to possess, when under the strictest and most searching examination, has often astonished persons unaccustomed to deal with them, and not fully conversant with the subtle phenomena of insanity. The illustrious LORD ERSKINE observes in one of his most able and eloquent speeches, "that in all the cases which have filled Westminster Hall with the most complicated considerations, the lunatics and other insane persons, who have been the subjects of them, have not only had the most perfect knowledge and recollection of all the relations they stood in towards others, and of the acts and circumstances of their lives, but have, in general, been remarkable for subtlety and acuteness. These are the cases which frequently mock the wisdom of the wisest in judicial trials; because such persons often reason with a subtlety which puts in the shade the ordinary conceptions of mankind; their conclusions are just, and frequently profound; but the premises from which they reason, when within the range of the malady, are uniformly false; not false from any defect of knowledge of judgment but because a delusive image, the inseparable companion of real insanity is thrust upon the subjugated understanding incapable of resistance because unconscious of attack."

A repudiation (for a short period) of the existence of insane thought, admitted by the patient and known by others to have previously existed, the ability to converse continuously and rationally, with great shrewdness and sagacity, on matters requiring for their comprehension a vigorous and well-balanced intellect, are no conclusive and demonstrative tests *per se*, of legal soundness of mind, or of recovery from an attack of insanity. In the great majority of cases, evidence of this character should, however, be viewed as establishing a *bona fide* restoration to health of mind.

Some years ago, I had under my care a young gentleman who had tried, on more than one occasion, to murder his sister when under the delusion that she had prevented, by her unjustifiable interference, his marrying a lady of large property and high rank. The idea was altogether an insane one. For nearly a year this notion was never absent from his mind. He, however, manifested other symptoms of mental derangement. Eventually, the delusion with regard to the sister appeared to have been removed from his imagination. I spoke frequently to him on the subject, and he declared that his impressions with regard to his sister no longer existed. He once observed, "I wish to see my dear sister for the purpose of craving her forgiveness for permitting such bad thoughts to enter my mind." To all appearance he seemed to be restored to mental health, or at least to be convalescent, yet I had (from a variety of trifling circumstances, when viewed by themselves) my doubts and misgivings as to the *bona fide* character of his apparent recovery. For more than a week, his mind, he alleged, was free from all delusion. I called one day to see him, and placed myself in such a position that I could closely observe his conduct, and hear his conversation, without his being aware of my presence. When I first saw him he was reading. In about ten minutes he left the sofa where he was sitting, and approached towards the looking-glass. He gazed fixedly at himself for a few minutes. He then began, whilst in this position, to indulge in the most malignant grins. At last he clenched his fists, and walked about the room in an agitated manner, exclaiming, "The villain," "the miscreant," "the viper," "the snake in the grass," "I'll do for her on the first opportunity." I was now satisfied that the lunatic had been playing an artful part for a purpose, and that he was still in a dangerous state of insanity. I did not converse with him on this occasion, but did so on the following day, when, strange to say, he persisted in declaring that he had no delusions with regard to his sister, or any member of the family. I made no reference to what I observed on the previous day, and being convinced in the course