

writer on the subject, at one time Surgeon General of the United States Army, and now associate editor of *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, said recently in a discussion which took place on this subject, at a meeting of the "Medico-Legal Society, of New York," "that he is in favor of punishing insane people, just as he would a tiger who went about destroying people. If a lunatic had a homicidal mania he would hang him."* He would not only hang *any* and *all* insane people who killed any one, but he would hang them if they had a mania to kill, even were the deed not performed. This would be an effectual way to make vacancies in our asylums, and would remove perplexing problems from courts of law to the scaffold and the grave. I am sure such a brutal idea will never prevail where humanity exists. One of the theories of the transmigration of souls was, that some one died when each mortal was born, and the soul of the dead one was immediately translated to the new-born child. I am afraid no one died when Dr. Hammond was born. I take this charitable view of the author of such a horrible proposal.

There is reason for caution in a witness, when he is asked to acknowledge that peculiarities of mind may mean insanity and irresponsibility. A man may do a great many strange things, and still have perfect soundness of mind. There is no common standard to measure mentality with, analogous to the yard stick and bushel in the British Museum. Each man must be gauged by himself, in his antecedent conduct and individuality, for among all the sons and daughters of Adam, no two are alike in body and mind. No man can be justly tried by a code of laws, which indulges in vague generalities, on the one hand, or which vaunts an absurd, minute classification on the other. What

* *The Journal of Mental and Nervous Diseases*, July 1878, p. 556, *et seq.*