

one of the oldest diseases of which we have any record, how little has been done to alleviate the suffering of the insane, until the last fifty years. If any one interested in the history of insanity were to visit the Asylum of Sainte Anne in Paris, he would there see illustrations of the methods and contrivances with which the insane were treated in the early part of the eighteenth century. The cruelty of these methods and the torture of these contrivances, reminds one of nothing so strongly as of the Spanish Inquisition. When Pinel (one of the brightest minds of his day) cast off the iron fetters from the insane at the Salpêtrière a little more than one hundred years ago, it was hailed as a great advance in the treatment of the insane. This wise and humane act is one of which the whole medical profession may feel justly proud, especially as it was owing to this action that all mechanical restraint gradually disappeared from asylums. When, however, Tuke put into practice the theory that lunacy is a bodily disease, he established a firm basis for the rational treatment of the insane, on which has been built during the last century, all the best remedial measures for the relief and cure of the most serious affliction that can come to man, and thus earned the everlasting gratitude of countless ages yet unborn. Barbarous as seems to us the so-called treatment of the insane in the eighteenth century, there is still one grave defect which exists to-day, and which, on account of its injustice and cruelty, almost makes one wonder if one is not living in the times before Pinel and not in this century of ours. I refer to the fact, that a poor man, however blameless his life, may be arrested, thrown into a common jail with the greatest criminals of the country, and taken before a police magistrate like a common felon. Why? Simply because he has the misfortune to be suffering from a disease of the brain. Had it been a disease of the liver, a much less important organ, an ambulance would have been sent for him, and he at once would have been given a bed in one of the public hospitals. When one considers that in 1854 (only fifty years ago) there were as many insane poor in chains, in the State of New York, as when Pinel removed the iron fetters in 1792, can one wonder that distrust and suspicion should still exist in the minds of the masses? In the light of these facts, is it astonishing that the laity, without any adequate knowledge of the modern treatment of insanity, should be prejudiced against asylums, and defer asylum treatment for a relative, until the last extremity is reached, when often, alas, it is too late?

But it is to the better education of the medical student, and as a necessary result, that of the future general practitioner, that I would like to direct your attention. As is well known by all