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"FROM DEMONIAL POSSESSION TO INSANITY."

REVIEW AND ABSTRACT OF THE ABOVE CHAPTER FROM ANDREW
D. WHITE'S "WARFARE OF SCIENCE WITH THEOLOGY."

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After twenty-five years of study and research, Andrew D. White has given to the reading public, in book form, his "Warfare of Science with Theology," chapters of which have appeared, from time to time, in the *Popular Science Monthly*.

No chapter in this epoch-making book will be read with more interest by the alienist, the sociologist, or the student of human nature, than that which pertains to the history of the insane. In brief, it is a contribution to the past and prevalent ideas regarding insanity, particularly the conceptions evolved by dogmatic theology and the growth of scientific ideas pertaining to its treatment. It details the long drawn but decisive battle between scientific and theological beliefs regarding the nature of insanity, establishes the complete divorcement of the subject from ecclesiasticism and summarizes the causes that led to the victory of the scientific view.

The chapter is divided into three sections, as follows: 1. Theological Ideas of Lunacy and its Treatment. 2. The Beginnings of a Healthful Scepticism. 3. The Final Struggles and Victory of Science. Pinel and Tuke.

At the outset it should be stated that Mr. White seldom drags religion into his conflict. Contending that dogmatic theology is, in most part, responsible for this "warfare," he aims his shafts almost wholly at its vulnerable points. Impartially he details the conflict from the earliest ages, and with great erudition brings together a large mass of facts to prove his argument.

It is fitting that the evolution of beliefs regarding the mentally afflicted should be accorded a prominent position among the factors which have rescued our conceptions of the infinite from superstition and ignorance. This fact is forcibly impressed upon the mind when it is remembered that the whole subject of mental and hysterical manifestations was once and for long the special province of priests and exorcists. Believing that "madness" was but a manifestation of the devil, the one afflicted was said to be "possessed"

80 [n h n d]



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with a devil or demons. Once "possessed," the miserable individual was made the victim of a thousand tortures devised by a fanatical clergy, whose mildest curative measure was exorcism. The ideas of the church regarding the insane are very exhaustively treated by our author in the first division of the chapter under review.

In his inimitable and characteristic style he traces the evolution of primitive ideas regarding lunacy from the earliest belief in evil spirits to the days of Pinel and Tuke. At the outset, in no uncertain tone, he places the gist of the contest clearly before the reader:

"Of all the triumphs won by science for humanity few have been farther-reaching in good effects than the modern treatment of the insane. * * * * On one side have stood the survivals of various superstitions, the metaphysics of various philosophies, the dogmatism of various theologies, the literal interpretation of various sacred books, and especially of our own—all compacted into a creed that insanity is mainly or largely demoniacal possession; on the other side has stood science, gradually accumulating proofs that insanity is always the result of physical disease."

His investigations begin with some of the oldest authentic records, in which he traces evidence of a belief in the diabolic agency of evil spirits. Assyrian mythological tablets were found to give formulas for casting out the evil spirits of disease. He traces the Hebrew conception of "demoniacal possession" to these sources, which antedate the Christian era by many centuries. The early pagan ideas regarding the insane were likewise, in all probability, inherited from the Orient, so that, upon one subject at least, pagans and Christians were in unison.

In the early history of the insane the only bright period is found to hover about the life and teachings of the "father of medicine." With an intuition and perspicuity truly marvelous, Hippocrates asserted, over 2,000 years before its final adoption, that all madness is simply disease of the brain. This great heritage to his followers was not destined to be lost. Mr. White takes the slender scientific thread, having its origin with Hippocrates, and traces it down through the early Christian era, the Middle Ages, and more recent times, until it becomes, in the hands of Pinel, a great instrument in defense of truth. This great succession in the apostolate of science, as White terms its course, passed through the minds of men more infallible than popes. Upon this register appear in sequence the names of Aretus, Soranus, Galen, Coelius Aurelianus

Alexander of Tralles, and Paul of Ægina, all of whom advanced new facts in support of the scientific theory, "but, above all, laid stress on the cure of madness as a disease, and on the absolute necessity of mild treatment."

Passing on, he shows how the theory of demoniacal possession became a teaching of the church; how mild exorcisms, fetiches, and priestly practices were mingled in the treatment of madness with a polypharmacy which may well be the envy of a more modern age. As examples, he cites the following prescriptions, among others:

"If an elf or a goblin come, smear his forehead with this salve, put it on his eyes, cense him with incense, and sign him frequently with the sign of the cross."

"For a fiend-sick man: When a devil possesses a man, or controls him, from within with disease, spew-drink of lupins, bish-opswort, henbane, and garlic. Pound these together, add ale and holy-water." It will be observed that one of the ingredients of the above mixture survives to-day in the treatment of the insane, as hyoscine or hyoscyamine.

But unfortunately, as Mr. White states, this was not the worst form of treatment. "The idea of satanic possession of lunatics led to attempts to punish the indwelling demons. The admonitions to gentle treatment by the great pagan and Moslem physicians were forgotten, and the treatment of lunatics tended more and more toward severity."

The endeavors to wound Satan's pride by exorcism, as detailed in this chapter, savors of modern blackguardism, as seen by the following choice abstract:

"Thou lustful and stupid one, * * * thou sooty spirit from Tartarus, * * * thou loathsome cobbler, perfidious boar, swollen toad, envious crocodile, etc."

Equally ludicrous were the efforts to drive out demons by fumigation with rank drugs, such as asafœtida, sulphur, etc.

The balance of the chapter is taken up with a discussion regarding cathedral friezes, paintings, and glass stains. Dramatization of the theological beliefs, with Satan and his imps as the principal actors, is also mentioned.

So much for the early theological ideas of insanity and its treatment. It is with a feeling of relief that we pass from this division of the chapter to one which records the beginnings of a healthful scepticism. Ecclesiasticism accomplished nothing for the

insané. Not a single so-called curative measure of the church survives to-day in the therapeutics of psychiatry.

If Mr. White errs in his critical analysis of the theological side of the subject, it is on account of his condescending tolerance of the errors of fanaticism and ignorance. He is semi-apologetic. He treats lightly, if not wholly ignores, the fact that until very recent times, if not to-day, the church hampers science in many ways. Witness the support it gives to anti-vivisectionists; note how it taboos the anti-toxin theory; and observe how denominational universities refuse the admission of certain scientific and sociological studies to their curriculum.

Mr. White's observations and studies lead him to believe that beginnings of a healthful scepticism had a very early date. Its conception was found to be of unknown origin, although some evidence in the form of isolated myths go to support the assumption that the insane, at a very early period, were believed to be irresponsible by a few thinkers. Little evidence of the scientific spirit is apparent, however, until the Hippocratic epoch. Indeed, its inception, historically speaking, arose from the teachings of the "father of medicine," and its direct transmission through a line of ancient students of the mind has already been mentioned. Unfortunately for psychiatry, it needs be recorded that this scientific wave reached its height and began to recede with the decay of Rome. Not until the revival of learning, as Mr. White shows, did the scientific spirit again become manifest. From the hands of the disciples of Galen and his co-workers the care and treatment of the insane passed into the province of the church. Thereafter, for a thousand years, all evidence of a scientific belief is obscured by superstition and myth. But it never died out, though at times it appeared extinct. Confronted by the inquisition, belief in witchcraft, and the direct agency of Satan, political and papal wars, and the dense ignorance of the masses, the flame flickered and burned low.

Yet all opposition did not come from the established church. Mr. White justly brings to light the despicable course of a small quota of physicians who wielded much influence and opposed the scientific spirit for mercenary reasons.

On the contrary, our author finds that here and there in the church, upholders of the scientific theory were to be found, though they were few and their efforts weak.

Throughout this section Mr. White deals with such divisions of

his subject as "exaltation to sainthood of hysterical individuals imbued with the spirit of reverence and prophecy," "persecution of hallucinatory cases," particularly those who believed themselves to be the "Son of God," etc., "epidemics of hysteria," "the influence of Bossuet," and, lastly, "persecution of those who supported and taught the scientific aspects of lunacy, such as Flade, Cornelius Agrippa, Weir, Loos, Bekker, Thomasius, and others."

Passing into the third and last division of the chapter we find pages that shine with the lustrous achievements of science. The first laurels rest with French scepticism. Persons condemned to death for sorcery by the Parliament of Rouen, during the reign of Louis XIV, were finally ordered, by Colbert, his minister, to be treated for their insanity.

Mr. White's researches into English psychiatry lead him to believe that the theological view of "demoniacal possession" clung longer to the clergy in Great Britain than in France or Germany. As great and good a man as John Wesley protested, in the last century, against "giving up to infidels such proofs of an invisible world as are to be found in diabolic possession." But the scientific view that madness was simply a disease of the brain steadily grew, and toward the close of the eighteenth century is found shoulder to shoulder with the older French teachings. Wesley lived to see his ideas refuted and science triumphant.

To Germany White gives the credit of first demonstrating to the world that insanity is due to organic disease. By means of post-mortem examinations of deceased "possessed" persons, German scientists found evidence of gross changes in the cerebrum. To quote our author, "the work of German men of science in this field is noble indeed; a great succession from Weir to Virchow have erected a barrier against which all the efforts of reactionists beat in vain."

Very gratifying to Americans is the contemplation that "the first humane impulse of any considerable importance in this field seems to have been aroused in America. In the year 1751 the Society of Friends founded a small hospital for the insane on better principles in Pennsylvania. To use the language of the founders, it was intended as 'a good work, acceptable to God.'"

Toward the close of the eighteenth century Pinel appears, and to the prisoners in the Bicêtre, darkness and chains give way to light and gentleness. Mr. White rehearses with much impressiveness the innovations introduced by him, details the opposition he

met with and the results obtained by the new methods of treatment. His career is familiar to every student of psychiatry and need not be dwelt upon.

The work of William Tuke in England is also cited and the foundation of "York Retreat" mentioned. Independently of Pinel he worked out this great problem, and goes down in history as the first real benefactor of the insane in Great Britain.

With Tuke Mr. White closes the chapter somewhat abruptly. It is to be regretted that he did not continue his researches down to more recent times, or until psychiatry had more completely shaken off the shackles of dogmatic theology. But he has arrayed a sufficient mass of facts to prove his argument. The battle between the adherents of "demoniacal possession" and the scientists was made decisive by Pinel and Tuke. Only the redoubts remained to be taken by their followers.

To students of psychiatry Mr. White's researches will be of great ultimate benefit. Many facts hitherto obscured have been cleared up and much new material added to its literature. Alienists are henceforth his debtors.

