

A TEXT-BOOK OF INSANITY

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A text-book of insanity by Charles Mercier

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CHARLES MERCIER

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OF INSANITY**

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BY

CHARLES MERCIER

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Dedication.

TO

THOMAS CLIFFORD ALLBUTT,

M.A., M.D., LL.D., D.SC., F.R.S.,

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF PHYSIC IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

IN RECOGNITION OF HIS EFFORTS

TO PROMOTE THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF INSANITY

DURING HIS TOO BRIEF TENURE OF THE OFFICE

OF

COMMISSIONER IN LUNACY.

PREFACE.

YEAR by year the students to whom I lecture ask me what book on insanity they ought to study, and year by year I have to recommend books which I know to be excellent in themselves, but which I feel are of such bulk and volume as to be out of proportion to the time which students can profitably give to an outlying subject, and to the vast mass of other material which they have to assimilate during their brief curriculum. Before that important event which took place in the year B.C. 2348,* medical students might have spent forty or fifty years in preparing for examination, and have looked forward to commencing practice when they were entering their second or third century, but nowadays it seems incumbent upon their teachers to avoid discursiveness, and I think that our knowledge of insanity has reached a point at which its various forms and varieties, like those of bodily disease, can be described as types, without having recourse to descriptions of illustrative cases, which bulk so large in most text-

* According to Ussher, but the Septuagint has it B.C. 3246.

books on the subject. Moreover, I was anxious to put forward the distinction that I have drawn in this book between forms of insanity and varieties of insanity, a distinction which I think goes far to solve the difficulties of classification which have been so great a stumbling-block to successive writers on insanity for generations.

In giving a preliminary sketch of the normal processes of which insanity is the disorder, I have followed a course which is very unusual, but which I have pursued for many years in lecturing on the subject, and have found to be a very useful foundation on which to build a knowledge of insanity. Special stress is laid upon observation of conduct, which is in my opinion the key to the subject. The causes of insanity have also been separately dealt with, and as I hold that there are not insanities, but insanity only, this course is at once convenient and logical.

C. M.

FLOWER HOUSE, CATFORD.

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