

**ONLY A
TWELVEMONTH; OR,
THE COUNTY ASYLUM**

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Only a Twelvemonth; Or, The County Asylum by Anonymous

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"'Tis true 'tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true"



London:
MARCUS WARD & CO., 67, 68, CHANDOS STREET
AND ROYAL ULSTER WORKS, BELFAST
1882

251. i. 712.



P R E F A C E.



THIS little work tells its own tale. It is the record of a personal experience of a County Asylum. The author has communicated to the publishers the real name of the place where she suffered, with other particulars, which for obvious reasons it is necessary to suppress. The book is, in fact, another contribution to the long list of indignant protests against the laws which permit the incarceration

of an unfortunate person on the suspicion of a general practitioner and the approval of an expert. Nothing is more subtle than an affection of the brain—nothing more beyond the reach of an ordinary country doctor—nothing more difficult to draw than the line where reason ends and where insanity begins. Yet we hand ourselves over, deliberately or carelessly, as we choose to put the case, to the tender mercies of a man who is tolerably sure to treat every case which he does not understand as one of insanity, and to a specialist, a "mad doctor," who is popularly supposed to believe that half mankind are mad and ought to be locked up, and the other half on the verge of madness, and ought to be kept under the supervision of mad doctors. The unfortunate lady who writes this book was afflicted exactly in the same way as

Hilda in the tale. At a time when her strength was overtaken, when she was actually sickening of fever, the most terrible blow was dealt her—she heard accidentally, suddenly and without preparation, of her lover's supposed death. Then it was that an ignorant practitioner, backed by the specialist, got rid of a difficulty to which he was unequal, and sent her to a Lunatic Asylum. One cannot expect parents to be less ignorant than doctors; they acquiesced; probably the thought of a lunatic in the house was too much for them, and the usual commonplaces comforted them. She would be well cared for; nothing could be better than the regulations; no one could be kinder than the attendants; the doctors were the best of men.

The story of her treatment by the kindest of attendants is told in these pages; that is

to say, it is half told. Who can tell, unless he have a pen of fire, the frightful sufferings of a young girl, carried to a mad-house while in a state of stupefied torpor, on awakening to reason, at finding herself thus shut up, alone, or among such dreadful companions, uncared for, neglected? This is what the benevolent regulations, coupled with the unremitting watchfulness of doctors, allow in a County Asylum. This is, in fact, what is always liable to happen, in spite of all regulations, unless the regulations are accompanied and watched by a real system of visiting. It will be seen in the course of the narrative, that if the visitors had done their duty, this unhappy girl would not have become the prey of the women whose callous heartlessness, growing naturally out of their hard and difficult work, can only be repressed by the most unremitting