

**THE CURABILITY OF
INSANITY: A
SERIES OF STUDIES**

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The Curability of insanity: A Series of Studies by Pliny Earle

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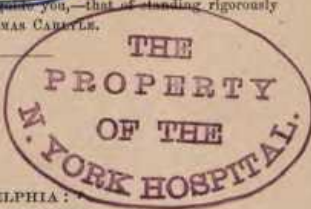
BY

PLINY EARLE, A.M., M.D.,

LATE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE STATE LUNATIC HOSPITAL AT NORTHAMPTON, MASS.; EX-PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENTS OF AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS FOR THE INSANE; PRESIDENT OF THE NEW ENGLAND PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY; HONORARY MEMBER OF THE BRITISH MEDICO-PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION; CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE NEW YORK MEDICO-LEGAL SOCIETY, AND OF THE MEDICAL SOCIETY AT ATHENS, GREECE; MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY; OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION, ETC.



"One principle may be sufficient to guide you,—that of standing rigorously by the fact, however naked it look."—THOMAS CARLYLE.



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1887.

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PREFACE.

It is now nearly ten years since my essay—"The Curability of Insanity," enlarged from the original in the annual report for the official year 1875-76 of the Northampton Lunatic Hospital—was read before the New England Psychological Society, and published, by direction of that association, in pamphlet form. Meanwhile, seven other articles upon the same subject have been embodied in my annual reports to the trustees of the aforesaid institution. Those papers have been favorably received by a large number of readers, both at home and abroad. (It is not presumptuous to claim that they have greatly modified the aspect of insanity, as a curable mental condition,) in the view of a large proportion of the persons most interested in the subject. They have thus been an important agent in stimulating the minds of philanthropists to seek—and in several notable instances to adopt—other methods for the custody and care of a large part of the insane than that of collecting them in expensive and unwieldy curative institutions. They have caused a very important change in the statistical methods of Massachusetts, in this

country, and Great Britain in Europe, whereby the reader is informed of the number of *persons*, as well as of *patients*, or *cases*, that recover. This more nearly perfect method will undoubtedly gradually find its way to other States and countries, until it becomes universal.

Under these circumstances, hoping that they may still be beneficial in the directions indicated, and by the expressed desire of some of the leaders in the great work of public charity and beneficence in this country, I have here brought those papers together, in a form convenient for preservation, perusal, and reference. The book, as a book, is simply what it is represented to be in its title,—“A series of Studies,”—each of them essentially, or to a great extent, independent of the others. It consequently follows that any criticism of it on the assumption, either expressed or implied, that it is, or that it professes to be, a well-digested, logically-constructed monograph, would be unjust, and hence worthy of deprecation.

Some of the repetition, which, in the original publication, was a necessary consequence of several discussions of one and the same subject, has here been avoided; and it is hoped that no more of it remains than is necessary effectively to impress upon the mind of the reader the points which are intended to be illustrated or enforced by it.

P. E.

August 28, 1886.

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THE CURABILITY OF INSANITY.

STUDY FIRST.

(WRITTEN IN 1876.)

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

WITHIN the last few years, calculations have been made, in more than one of the States, for the purpose of showing the pecuniary loss that has accrued to those States, respectively, from a failure to cure that portion of their dependent insane assumed to have been curable in the early stages of the disease. In Pennsylvania, the calculation was made by the Board of Public Charities, and is based upon the estimated number that became insane in the decennium from 1864 to 1873, inclusive. The author of it assumes, upon what he considers unquestionable authority, that seventy-five per cent. of them, if properly and seasonably treated, might have been permanently restored to health and usefulness. Had this been done, the total cost of treatment, together with the support, for life, of the twenty-five per cent. uncured, would, according to his estimate, have been