

**THE FRIENDS OF THE
INSANE, THE SOUL
OF MEDICAL EDUCATION
AND OTHER ESSAYS**

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The friends of the insane, The soul of medical education and other essays by Bayard Holmes

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BAYARD HOLMES

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BY
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CHICAGO



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1911 PREFACE.

The following essays are corrected reprints from the pages of the *Lancet-Clinic*. Some brief additions have been made to them for completeness or clearness. They were written with a distinct purpose.

It has seemed very unreasonable, not to say cruel, that the insane are cared for by the State, not for their own good, but, as Dr. George Webster, President of the Illinois State Board of Health once said at a banquet of a medical fraternity, for the good and safety of the sane. Millions are spent in custody, but not a dollar in cure, not a dollar in research. If the man of business, the stock farmer, for example, lost one out of every 300 of his creatures by an expensive disease or accident, and continued caring for these sick animals at great expense, making no effort to discover the source of the disease or do away with the cause of the accident, he would be in the position of the forty sovereign States that care for the insane but make no effort to discover and eradicate the cause.

For every thousand dollars spent in custody ten dollars ought to be spent in research. Economy might dictate that even a hundred dollars out of each thousand should be spent in research and cure. As it is, absolutely no effort is made by any department of State to shut off the need of an expense for custody of the insane, which is as much a burden to industry as a perpetual war.

It is my belief that this work of investigating the causes of insanity should be carried on by the university. The problem seems to be one of biologic chemistry. The chemical libraries and trained chemists and biologists are already crowded about the university. The precedent of associating the agricultural experimental stations with the State university has opened the way, and the prospect of great economic benefit to the State has been demonstrated by the work of the Department of Agriculture. If the various departments of State charity and correction could be under the scrutiny of a scientific body of imaginative investigators, the need of many millions for custody and correction could be eliminated (Rhodes).¹

The insane themselves cannot, for various and obvious reasons, present their claims.² The friends of the insane have never been organized for their own protection, education and consolation. There seems to be a strange isolation in the fact of insanity in the household. For death and for the bereaved by death there is ostentatious sympathy and consolation from friends and strangers and the world of literature. For the bereaved by insanity there is a fateful silence and turning away. There is every reason why the friends of the insane should be thoroughly organized into a great executive and educational body. The commitment of the insane is in many States a relic of barbaric legal procedure and should be corrected. In

¹ Rhodes: Internationaler Kongress für Irrenpflege. Wien, Oct., 1908. Offizieller Bericht.

² Beers, C. W.: *A Mind that Found Itself*. Macmillan & Co., 1908. 8vo, pp. 363.

every State the custody of the insane is conducted under ideal conditions for the promotion of tuberculosis. There is no State institution where adequate encouragement is provided for the study of the causes of insanity or of the conditions of parasitism, hematology, nutrition and metabolism during the course of the disease. There is no State in which the insane are available for demonstration to medical societies and medical students. The ordinary means of studying insanity, which medical men have in studying all other diseases, is taken away from the medical profession by law, and no other provisions are made at all commensurate with the importance and the complexity of the problem.

The problem of the insane is intricately associated with the problems of crime, prostitution and poverty, as well as with the problems of hospital management, education and all political economies. A considerable proportion of the insane first manifest their disease by acts that bring them into conflict with the police. The courts should be provided by the friends of the insane with a questor or advocate for the insane, whose duty it should be to call the attention of the court to such evidence as might early lead to the treatment of cases of incipient insanity, such as the State now provides, and thus save the judiciary from the bungling decisions which so often confound the officers of penal institutions. If an organization of the friends of the insane did nothing more than provide an advocate for the insane in criminal courts and police courts, the reason for such an organization would soon be ad-

mitted by all whose complacency would be disturbed by the innovation.

When insanity comes to a household, there is nothing that is too expensive to be undertaken. The private sanitarium is recommended by alienists because the family dread and are terrified by the State institutions. The expense at these private places is very high—fifty to two hundred dollars a week. Nothing commensurate with the price is, however, furnished. The attendants work for fifteen to thirty dollars a month. There are no laboratories, baths or skilled attendants. The folks who look upon surroundings of luxury as more important than the researches which reason dictates will always patronize these places, where brass door knobs and Brussels carpets take the place of bolts and bare floors. If a small part of the largess poured out on the unsanitary, unnecessary and unappreciated display of the private mad-houses was devoted to research, something could be accomplished by private initiative, and that promptly. It should be the duty of an organization of the friends of the insane to warn any but the very rich against the private sanitarium, and dissuade them from their prejudices against the State institutions.

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