PART IV.—NOTES AND NEWS.

FIRE AT THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE ASYLUM.

A rather serious fire broke out at the Fulbourn Lunatic Asylum on March 12th, 1872. The fire is supposed to have originated from some defect in a flue which led from the basement through the centre of the house. In the basement are some boilers, and a steam engine. In the upper storey the flue passed through a sort of lumber room, in which were stored sundry boxes and inflammable material. The fire was discovered about 5·30 p.m., just as the workmen were leaving, and they were attracted by the smoke and returned to the Asylum. Owing to this fact an ample supply of water was soon available, and the men who knew the building exerted themselves actively in the best way to prevent the spread of the flames. By these means the fire was limited to the chapel and a room above, in the centre of the Asylum. The chapel and a room above are completely destroyed, and sundry adjacent rooms and portions of the roof are injured. The patients and attendants worked with the utmost zeal and energy, and soon reduced the fire. The damage is estimated at about £700. Had it not been for the speedy aid afforded, and for some other favourable accidents, a great part of the asylum would probably have been destroyed. We hear that offers of assistance were telegraphed from the Three Counties and Sussex Asylums next day. Luckily the patients were but little incommoded. It is fortunate the results were no worse.

The Editor of the Journal of Mental Science.

Hanwell, March 3rd, 1872.

DEAR SIR,—It occurs to me that the case I cited in my letter to the Solicitor to the Treasury,* impugning the correctness of the opinion expressed by some of the witnesses at the trial of the Rev. Mr. Watson, "that the insane do not disclose their intention of committing suicide, but on the contrary, carefully conceal it," may be considered an exceptional one, and so taken to prove the accuracy of the allegation. Although I guarded against such an assumption by stating in the onset that I knew of *several cases* in which the insane did announce their determination to commit suicide, perhaps it may be well to anticipate the objection I name by quoting briefly some of the cases. *One patient*, interpreting literally the words, "if thy right eye offend thee pluck it out and cast it from thee," actually attempted this, and openly declared his determination to destroy himself, which he ultimately effected by hanging, after failure in other ways. *Another*, believing himself to be in a state of reprobation, expressed a strong desire to go to the other world to see what his condition would be there, asked to be put out of his misery, and declared his intention of destroying himself at the first opportunity. I saw this man alone one morning, pacing a large dormitory in a disconsolate state, took him to the day-room, placed him in the care of an attendant, charging the man not to leave him; the attendant left the patient for a few minutes, and on return could not find him. Search was made in several places, the dock and canal were dragged; in a few hours the body was found hanging dead in a disused cellar, left open by workmen engaged in enlarging the asylum. *Another*, fairly educated, the son of a successful tradesman, disliking business, and disappointed at his father's refusal to purchase a commission for him in the army, enlisted, grew tired of the life of a private, was bought out of the regiment, engaged in betting at races and gambling, drank to excess, became insane, desponding, and openly declared his determination to destroy himself, which he did by hanging. *Another*, an elderly man, having failed in business, fretted greatly, passed sleepless nights, was much depressed, fell ill, insane, exhibited a tendency to suicide, refused food, begged to be released from his wretched plight, besought those about him to furnish him with the means of doing so himself, and at length effected his purpose by hanging.

* See page 81.

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These four and the one mentioned in my letter to the Solicitor to the Treasury, are the cases of patients who avowed their intention to commit suicide, and succeeded in accomplishing that object; those who entertained a like feeling and expressed it, but were protected against themselves by the unceasing watchful care of the attendants, constitute a very large number. One of these, an aged man, died lately, who for ten years consecutively persisted in making attempts upon his life, all of which were frustrated.

I am, dear sir,
Yours faithfully,
Dr. Maudsley, M.D. W. C. BEGLEY.

Retreat for the Insane, Hartford,
Connecticut, U. S. A., January 15, 1872.

SIR,—Your note informing me that I had been unanimously elected Honorary Member of the Association was received with grateful emotion. I know of no section of our profession which, during the present century, has accomplished more for science and humanity than this Association. Its honours, therefore, are, in my estimation, the highest honours of the profession.

I remain,
With great respect and esteem,
Your obedient servant,
JOHN S. BUTLER, M.D.

Harrington Tuke, M.D., Hon. Secretary,
Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain.

Books Received.

1. The Science and Practice of Medicine. By William Aitken, M.D., Professor of Pathology in the Army Medical School. Sixth Edition. *(See Part II., Reviews.)*
2. Treatise on the Medical Jurisprudence of Insanity. By Isaac Ray, M.D. Fifth Edition. *(See Part II., Reviews.)*
3. Theologisches Literaturblatt, in Verbindung mit der Katholisch-theologischen Facultät zu Bonn, herausgegeben von Prof. Dr. F. H. Neusch. Bonn, 15th January, 1872.

(The number of this Journal with which we have been favoured contains a full and critical review of Dr. Maudsley's "Body and Mind" by Dr. F. A. Hartsen, who says of it—"Die Hauptendenz des vorliegendes Buch ist also eine durchgehende Verherrlichung des Materialismus." We could not, of course, expect a critic in a theological journal to agree with the spirit of the book, but we cannot complain of the tone of his remarks, or of the thoroughness with which he has done his work. Our German friends carry their patient industry and thoroughness into their reviews.)

4. The Power above Matter: an Address read before the Hunterian Society, on the 11th of October, 1871. By Dennis de Berdt Hovell, President of the Society. Churchill. 1871.

(It is the author's object to show that we cannot accept materialism as a finality: that is to say, as the cause of the qualities which appertain to matter; but that there also are immaterial causes which act upon matter, and that materialism, as a finality, involves us in imperfect conclusions, or some inconsistent absurdity. He maintains that the compounds of protoplasm do not exhibit the phenomena of life, when brought together under any circumstances, unless they are endued with the principle of vitality. There are immaterial agencies distinct from material conditions. Our faculties, whether of body, mind, or feeling, are not the *result* of molecular changes:

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