*Mr. Charles Reade's 'Hard Cash.'**

"This work is an exposure of what the author considers the abuses of the law, in so far as it deals with private lunatic asylums, though, as the story belongs to the date of 1847, it may be supposed that some of Mr. Reade's satire is now inapplicable. He, however, is prepared with whole hosts of cases,—extracts from blue-books and law reports—to show the literal accuracy of all his statements, and he calls his tale 'a matter-of-fact romance.' The fiction, therefore, with which we have now to do is of a composite order, and cannot be measured wholly by the standards of fiction. What Mr. Reade can do in the region of pure fiction is best seen in his first volume, before he gets entangled in the intricacies of lunatic law. His first volume is delightful. There are descriptions of Oxford life, and sea life, and little scenes of lovemaking, which are as enticing as anything of the sort we know. The picture of a boat-race on the Thames is perfect. These chapters could not be written but by a man of true genius; nevertheless, they are here and there defaced with a mannerism which a man of Mr. Reade's education ought to despise. It is the merest affectation to express a whisper in print by the use of very small type. Another affectation is the use of broken sentences, in which the author chiefly indulges at the commencement of his work, before he has whipped himself up to his proper pace. These mannerisms are all the more unpleasant, because in a man of Mr. Reade's power they are quite needless. He can write with such clearness, and he has so much to say, that he can afford to be simple, and to dispense with false adornments. One of the most pleasant things in his writing is that it seems to come from a full mind. He carefully studies and reads up for his subjects, and takes a pride in cramming his pages with matter. He may be right or wrong, but there is no thinness in his style. He may be rough and rude at times, but he has always mass and weight. Over and above this, he has a clear perception of character, and can paint it well. Sometimes he is apt to caricature, but generally his personages are lifelike. He is excellent in criticism; he is very good in the description of some pathetic scene; his chief fault arises out of too strict an adherence to fact—too sure a reliance on the artistic value of fact.

"What does Mr. Reade mean by calling his tale a 'matter-of-fact romance?' No novel is worth reading which is not founded on fact, and which does not look like fact. But it is a peculiarity of facts that often they do not look like facts; hence the hackneyed phrase that they are stranger than fiction. It is thus a point of the greatest difficulty to discern what are the facts which can be used as fiction, and what are the facts which it would be necessary to reject. Poor Mr. Thackeray's friends teased him a little for the melodramatic conclusion of his last novel, in which a lost will was suddenly extracted from the sword-case of an old broken-down chariot. He had so little sympathy with what was melodramatic, sought so systematically a mode of treating incidents which would be free from surprises, that he always took this bantering in good part, and he defended himself by saying—'It is no story, it is a fact,' and by describing how it occurred to a family in the north of England. Now, this is the very point at issue in the present case. On the title-page of his novel, and in a letter at the end of it, Mr Reade boasts of his facts; but good facts may be bad art. The author wishes to produce a certain practical effect, and he resorts to fiction as the most impressive

* 'Hard Cash; a Matter-of-fact Romance.' By Charles Reade. 3 vols. London: S. Low and Son.

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means of gaining his end. But he ought to see that if this be his view, he ought to use fact with moderation. Eccentric fact makes improbable fiction, and improbable fiction is not impressive. That Mr. Reade has written an exciting story is undeniable, and that he will lead people to inquire into the truth of his views is also likely enough; but he would probably produce a still more powerful effect if he treated fiction as fiction, and reserved his facts for a more sober and direct appeal to the public. Among these facts, which had better have been reserved, let us refer to the character and the opinions of Dr. Sampson. Dr. Sampson is the very extraordinary portrait of a London physician, a Scotchman, who has fought single-handed with the medical faculty, and has promulgated, under the name of chronothermalism, a theory of disease. Dr. Sampson speaks a strong Scotch dialect, denounces the medical profession in no mincing terms, and has written against them, both in prose and verse. He is perfectly well known; it is impossible to mistake the author of the theory of chronothermalism. The doctor is a very clever man, a man of character, whom any writer of fiction would like to study for one of the personages of his tale. Mr. Reade has taken him, and given him a very prominent place in 'Hard Cash.' He has shown him in all his kindliness of heart, all his shrewdness, all his pugnacity, all his extravagance, all his curious English. How far it was right, or in good taste socially, for Mr. Reade to draw such a portrait, which, were it only by the name of chronothermalism, would be instantly recognised, we do not stay to inquire; we condemn the introduction of such a portrait as an artistic error. Dr. Sampson's theories may be right or wrong, but it serves no good end to make a novel the means of sustaining a medical polemic. We have heard of religious novels and political novels, in which creeds and parties are satirised or commended, and we know not that fictions of this order have ever gained much esteem; but here is a medical novel of the same type, and are we to suppose that what is of doubtful success in politics and religion is to be of assured success in medicine? That in the views which Mr. Reade espouses there may be much truth we doubt not. Every profession has its quackery, and in the medical profession, which is a scientific one, quackery must be more discernible, by reason of its antagonism to science, than in any other. Be it so; but we are convinced that a novel is not the place in which one can best expose quack medicine. Mr. Reade, let us in justice add, has a great authority on his side. Molière covered the physicians of his day with ridicule.

"Mr. Reade concentrates his attack upon doctors generally into an attack upon the mad doctors, and into an exposure of the facility with which a man can, through their means, be entrapped into a lunatic asylum, and of the difficulty of getting out. Here, again, Mr. Reade has facts to go upon, and we are ready to believe that cruel wrongs are sometimes committed by the incarceration as lunatics of persons who are perfectly sane. In the law reports of our own columns it would not be difficult to point to instances of this kind. It was not long since we had to report the case of 'Hall v. Semple.' But Mr. Reade, while professing to adhere to matter of fact, cannot help generalising, and leads the reader insensibly to conclusions which, if he were stating his case in another form, he would not be likely to suggest. Getting hold of a few facts, and putting these into the form of fiction, he so works up a story, that the incautious reader is apt to imagine mad doctors to be scientific scoundrels, lunatic asylums to be a refined sort of Tophet, and the commissioners in lunacy and visiting justices to be a flock of sheep. This is the untruthful exaggeration of fact jumbled with fiction; an untruthfulness of which Mr. Reade could not be guilty if he were to state his accusations broadly in general terms; no matter on how many facts it may be founded, there is in every fiction an implication which Mr. Reade has not

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taken into account, when he stated his facts against the private lunatic asylums in the form of fable; he has in this respect overshot his mark, and runs a risk of having views which, if soberly stated in another form, might command assent, stoutly resisted and thrust aside as the hallucinations of an eccentric genius. Our private asylums are not perfect, and the methods of admission into them require to be revised. The destruction of a man's liberty is a serious thing, and especially when this can be effected in private, at the instance of a single member of his family. No safeguards can be too stringent to prevent the commission of wrong under the sanctions of the law. If Mr. Reade will state his case as it ought to be stated, and will point out the remedies, the public will gladly listen to him, and his eloquent pleading will go far to the bringing of redress: but a novel is a suspicious mode of agitation, and, though it may excite some inquiry, is not likely to effect any reform.

"We should be sorry if, because we object to Mr. Reade's novel as a mode of argument, we were supposed to condemn it as a means of entertainment. On the contrary, it is one of the most interesting of the series that has appeared in 'All the Year Round.' Mr. Reade is a man of rare power, and, though he is too fond of taking airings on his hobby, he makes his hobby canter very gaily before us."—*The Times*, January 2nd, 1864.

The Lunatic Asylums of Sydney, New South Wales.

(The Sydney 'Morning Herald,' November 29th, 1862; the Sydney 'Weekly Empire,' November 21st, 1862.)

At the meeting of the New South Wales Parliament on the 28th of November, 1862, a long discussion on the condition of the two Metropolitan Asylums at Tarban Creek and Parramatta, took place. One of the members, Mr. Holroyd, observed "that he had, for many years past, made the investigation of cases of insanity, and a proper treatment of the insane, subjects of very particular study, and desired to say that in the prosecution of that study he had made it his business to visit several of the institutions for the care and management of lunatics in different parts of Europe. He had several times visited the asylums at Tarban Creek and at Parramatta for this reason and—without intending to cast any personal imputations upon the medical gentlemen under whose management those institutions were—he must, nevertheless, take leave to say that he had been altogether surprised and shocked at the entire want of classification of the insane in those institutions, and indeed at the general management of the lunatics there confined. He had visited many of the institutions of the kind in the course of his life, but with one solitary exception, he had never seen any worse managed than these two asylums at the time that he visited them, about two years ago. The exception to which he alluded was the case of the madhouse at Cairo, in connection with the Government of Mahomet Ali Pacha in Egypt, to which he would make some further reference presently. He had found that at these two asylums no management or classification of any kind existed, and he firmly believed that in no town in Europe could a similar establishment be found in which the treatment of the insane was of a more unscientific and unsatisfactory character. He had known ladies of high position, against whom there was nothing whatever but their unhappy mental affliction placed—for it was a perversion of language to say "classed"—with scores of women who had been prostitutes of the lowest description. Such afflicted persons, without any regard to their habits and previous condition, were all thrust into the same yards as those occupied by degraded creatures,

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