BRITAIN'S SIBERIA.

The High Statistics of Insanity Explained

BY

A CERTIFIED LUNATIC.

"For such is the rash boldness of the uninitiated that they will frequently set up some monstrous abstract principle such as humanity, or tenderness, or the like idle folly, in obstinate defiance of all precedent and usage, and will even venture to maintain the same against the persons who have made the precedents and established the usage, and who must therefore be the best and most impartial judges of the subject."—DICKENS.

In his day, Dickens was an adept at showing how hapless humanity suffered under the pompous rigidity and pedantic absurdities of petty boards and bodies. To-day, under a supposedly almost perfect legislature, injustice and cruel oppression are as rife as ever, in a manner hitherto unsuspected by the general public; our Lunacy Laws, so far from being a protection are a menace, and the contributing causes of the high statistics of insanity, shame and disgrace our country.

I have always been a lover and admirer of Dickens, but it was during a four months' residence in a lunatic asylum—when I was afforded a unique opportunity of studying its internal workings—that I understood as I had never done before the greatness of his heart, when he created such a humanitarian as Betsy Trotwood, with her interesting charge, Mr. Dick.

It is supposed to be only in fiction that the sane are put into a lunatic asylum, but I found that in real life, with an enemy powerful enough, it could not only be done with ease, but with a matchless audacity and marvellous celerity.

It is said that nothing happens by chance, and I am convinced no chance placed me there. God does not always choose his instruments from among the righteous; and I can now furnish in my own person, indisputable proof of the utter futility of every section of Lunacy Law, and lift the curtain on the cruel farce of medical skill and care. A newspaper is one of the marks of civilisation that reaches the exiles of Britain's Siberia, and the unrest and suspicion regarding lunatic asylums, which is at last finding
vent in the public Press will, I know, bring hope to many a sad and despairing heart. Only those who have been behind the scenes know the terrible urgency of the case, and I appeal to the British public to at once take steps for the eradication of this cruel and inhuman social evil. Insane or sane, there is no protection for the hapless prisoners in our lunatic asylums under the Government of this so-called Christian land, and the people must come to the rescue. "He who allows oppression shares the crime." The insane are abused, and in regard to the sane, could any barbarity surpass the destruction of a fellow-creature's intellect?

There are more ways than one of committing murder, and though a doctor may not raise his hand against the patient, he virtually commits slow and cruel murder in imprisoning the sane with the insane.

The first and most amazing secret I surprised was that there is no treatment, and, what is more deplorable, no cure attempted, and, terrible thought—not desired. The patients are simply prisoners, leading the most desolate and unnatural lives it is possible for human beings to live, and lives calculated to keep them insane and drive them more so.

The doctors practically attempt nothing, but do not own to this. They can merely tell the form of insanity suffered from, and the patients are handed over to the full charge of, for the most part, ignorant and tactless men and women, whose strongest recommendations are their capabilities in the way of brute force. The law forbids the maltreatment and neglect of patients by employees in an asylum, under liability to penalty and prosecution (s. 99, Lunacy Act). This law is honoured more in the breach than in the observance, and cruel assaults are more the rule than the exception. I saw enough, and suffered enough, to make me wonder how often murder was committed. If the patients complain it is regarded as an evidence of delusion, and no written complaints find their way outside, as the letters are all read by the doctor, and posted at his pleasure. I have gleaned that this preposterous and arbitrary rule is followed in all similar institutions.

I was so struck with the extraordinary discovery that there was no treatment, that I asked the matron what was supposed to be the cure for insanity. She replied that it used to be the open-air cure, but it was now the rest cure. I said, "I am afraid you have more kills than cures."

The whole thing is a huge imposture, and there were such great possibilities in some of the insane. I wish to emphasise the fact that there is no treatment. During four months I saw none except ill-treatment. In the Aberdeen Asylum there are about 700 patients, and a visit from the superintendent was a rare occurrence.
The second doctor visited the wards twice daily—in the morning between ten and eleven, and in the evening between six and seven o’clock, his visits being of a few minutes duration. A number of the patients were put to bed at six o’clock, thus he only had a passing glimpse of them once a day. He spoke to all those who were capable of replying. The others, who had no idea who or what he was, he ignored, and his professional visit was over.

The onlooker sees most of the game, and my one diversion was criticising and showing up the weak spots of the establishment. I am glad to say that I did it fearlessly and openly. I noticed that the doctor was sometimes at a loss what to call the patients, and I said to him: “I see it takes you all your time to remember their names far less their diseases.” He was angry, and was often very angry at the things I said, and I was pleased to see it, as it was an acknowledgment of my sanity. I twittered him about it, and said he gave me no licence as a certified lunatic.

Another thing, which seems nothing short of diabolical, is the fact that there is no classification. The mildest cases are placed amongst the worst. Nervous, depressed, inoffensive creatures, old ladies merely suffering from the forgetfulness of age, and the absolutely sane have to endure all the racket of those afflicted with the worst forms of dementia, and from thirty to forty patients are confined within the four walls of one room. Some are fast developing curvature of the spine, as they sit from day to day with head sunk on breast and as much unnoticed as though they were stock or stone.

Everything is subservient to the smooth working of the establishment, and the maintenance of an attractive outward appearance for the benefit of the casual observer. The patients are a mere detail, and they do the hardest and the heaviest work. An attendant never does any disagreeable duty she can bully a patient into doing, and it is firmly impressed on the parish patients that work is compulsory because they are parish patients. They thus become valuable servants, and when, as in many cases in the course of time, reason asserts itself, applications for release are refused, and sane persons, in reality earning a livelihood, are kept as certified lunatics, with the stigma of pauperism attached. Through the laxity and lethargy of Parish Councils, the ratepayers provide free servants and a bonus to what is a huge commercial enterprise, deriving its income from sad afflictions of human beings. And mark this point, when the patients leave, the income goes, too; yet unlimited power is placed in the hands of paid officials interested in their retention, and there is a clause in the Lunacy Law which says: “A parish patient cannot be discharged if the doctor represents him unfit.” Observe, “represents.” He has not to prove it; and we have yet to learn that representation means
reality. It was a question as to which was worse off, the living statues of misery or the toiling slaves. Some of the women work in the kitchens from five o'clock in the morning till 8 p.m. Fifteen hours, with meals snatched while at work—and 8 p.m. means bed-time—a maximum of 105 hours a week, Sundays not being excepted. What think ye of it, ye gentlemen of ease, who keep your little tin trumpets blowing for your own vain-glory and the ghastly oppression of your fellow creatures? One of these women was placed in the asylum owing to a bad recovery after the birth of a child. This has already cost her seven years of her life. She is now recovered, and though she has a husband and three children their claims are set at naught, to say nothing of the rights of the wife and mother, and of the ratepayers, unemployed and otherwise, who are compelled to pay for suppositious skill and care. Against the bare, unsupported assertion of a paid official they are of no avail. And this is law!

Then the bulk of the household sewing is done by the patients, even the attendants' uniforms being made by them. One woman, a shirt maker, quite sane, who entered the asylum through a nervous breakdown after a serious operation, has been daily making shirts for the male patients for nine years, and has every chance to be—

"Sewing at once with a double thread
   A shroud as well as a shirt."

Some have been kept for 20, 30, 40, 50 years, and one male patient, who entered at the age of 22, has been an inmate for the long period of 65 years.

The patients themselves say that they are worse off than criminals, who get away when their sentence expires; and some of them work harder than the prisoners in a penal settlement, without the slightest benefit to themselves, and without a break for any sort of pleasure, even an airing. Did those who pay for their near and dear ones see the tasks they are set, and the treatment they receive, they would have a fit of madness in which there might be some method.

In some cases the disease is like a cloud, and soon passes off, and the doctors take and get the credit of cure. In others it is periodic, but very very slight, and you see nothing more than you can see in those slightly eccentric whom you will meet in any walk of life. At any football match you can see a field of temporary maniacs; then why shut up for long years gentle creatures capable of appreciating the joys of life, under the ostensible profession of a cure which is not even attempted.

There are impostors in every profession and grade of life, but the degree of M.D. apparently confers the distinction of being
exempt from criticism. Let me ask this question: Who sows more wild oats than medical students? Yet this degree seems to place them at once immaculate on a pedestal. The public are entitled to know what goes on behind those closed doors.

The worldly position of asylum authorities, the very respectability of the medical profession, and the nature of that profession constitute a source of danger to the patients. Suspicion is allayed, and the true complaints of the patients are disbelieved and disregarded. Another source of danger is the fee paid in connection with lunacy certificates, very often to little known and impecunious doctors who have not sufficient information to give a true judgment, but almost unconsciously adopt the opinion of others.

Why should there be so much secrecy and hole-and-corner work about the treatment of the insane? The cure of consumption, cancer, &c., is openly discussed and any new suggestion or discovery welcomed. The cure of insanity cannot be called a success when there are so many kept for their natural lives. In the case of one man nothing was accomplished in 65 years. Some have been kept so long that they must have come through the hands of quite a procession of M.D.'s.

I have not the number for England, but in Scotland there are 17,908 insane patients; 15,226 maintained by parochial rates. There are about 500 parish patients in the Aberdeen Asylum, and in the Commissioner’s Report the curious hope is expressed that this number may not be allowed to increase, and the care of the patients, the condition of the wards, and the management of the institution are favourably referred to. I entered this Burke and Hare establishment, called an asylum, on March 18th, 1908, perfectly sane, as the scapegoat of a widely ramified intrigue, and it will be sufficient to give a few instances of the care I saw exercised.

On the first day I never ceased wondering what could be the meaning of the terrible fate that had overtaken me. The answer came next morning, when I saw a night attendant assault a girl. The girl appeared very ill and dazed, and was very slow in her movements, which seemed to provoke the attendant. The following morning the same thing occurred, only the girl was more savagely struck and she sickened. Later, the matron came in and made a fuss over her and asked what had made her sick. When I found she was unable to tell, I spoke out and she was never struck again in my presence. I learned afterwards that this girl had broken down through attendance on her mother’s death-bed.

I was then in the reception ward where the patients are all put to bed for the first few days, even though in robust health. I saw a new patient put to bed for three days, and on the fourth day taken to work in the laundry. But it was a lunatic asylum and
the officials did the maddest things. The patients displayed the truest kindness towards each other, and there was more wit and wisdom among their damaged brains than among the entire staff. It was brought home to me in many ways that we are too much afraid and too much ashamed of insanity.

When I had been in the asylum for three days, a young mother suffering from puerperal fever was brought in delirious. She was put to bed almost opposite where I lay. Two beds from her a woman sat chattering incessantly like a magpie. In the bed next mine, there was a woman who rose every few minutes and knelt to the different patients, clasping and unclasping her hands and saying, "What does it all mean?" and protesting with most pathetic earnestness that she had done no wrong. It was terrible to listen to the constant reiteration of the same words. The young mother was comparatively quiet until a patient went to her bedside and asked if she could sing. She grasped the question so far that she immediately sat up in bed and sang "We parted on the shore," and the poor thing sang for hours nearly her whole family history to the same tune, until her voice was quite hoarse, and she required a sleeping draught to end it.

When she first started to sing she excited the patient next me, who immediately rose and knelt at the bedside of the singer. It was a scene that baffles description. The loud chatter of that other patient was going on all the time, and at short intervals she varied her rapid talk by singing, at the pitch of her voice, "Oh, call my brother back to me," to the tune "French." There were two attendants in the ward, but it excited no comment. I stood it as long as I could, then I rose and put the praying patient (who seemed to think that the singer was accusing her of something) to bed.

I can truthfully say that I never had a night's rest in the place. A quiet night was a thing unknown, and the circumstances under which I was there made sleep impossible. I hid the fact that I did not sleep because I was afraid of being drugged. Two attendants sat in this ward all night, and when all was quiet sometimes one sewed and the other read aloud. But it was a lunatic asylum. In the middle of the third night I was lying engrossed in my own thoughts when my attention was attracted by the word "soaking," spoken in a loud and angry tone. I heard the attendants scolding a patient, and concluded that it was a case of bed-wetting. The punishments always threatened were a cold bath or confinement in the strong room.

I heard these threats daily. The bathroom was within the ward and the patient was taken there. There was the rush of water, and in a few minutes she was screaming "Starvation, starvation"!
Then came the sound of continuous blows on her bare body, and the poor tortured creature shrieked and cursed at them. The noise was dreadful in the stillness of the night. It woke up the fever patient, and I sprang out of bed, put on a dressing-gown and went to the bathroom. Just as I reached the door it was flung wide open, and I saw the poor woman standing sobbing, quite naked with the water streaming down her hair. I noted instantly that there was no steam rising from the bath. I made an indignant protest, and the attendant who was in the act of coming out, ordered me off to the bed and told me it was none of my business. They put her to bed and one held her hands while the other administered a sleeping draught, of which the night attendants always had a supply. The fever patient who had started singing got a second dose to send her to sleep again.

Though the patient they had ill-treated had received an opiate at twenty minutes to three, such was the effect of the bath and the thrashing that she was wide awake at five o'clock, when I went to her bedside. I put my hand on her hair which was quite wet, and asked if the attendants gave her a bath in the night. "No, I don't think so," she replied. I knew then she was a safe subject to illtreat. She was turned out of bed at six, and I kept her under observation and saw how the opiate affected her. Her face was very much flushed, and she lay about the floor all day and took no food, but no one inquired into the why or wherefore. The fever patient was not allowed to finish undisturbed the sleep twice induced by artificial means, but was also roused and placed in a chair, while the night attendant, whose duty it was, made her bed.

After a fortnight in this ward I was placed in another, amid such terrible surroundings that cruel design was the only interpretation possible.

'Twas Lethe's gloom without its quiet,
    The pain without the peace of death.

Here I lived for three months; but no sane woman shall suffer as I suffered, nor shed such bitter tears, while I can say a word to prevent it. I survived the ordeal, but, as Dr. Arabella Kenealey recently stated regarding the incarceration of the sane, "The vast majority of the cases are never found out, because they prove fatal to the patients."

Asylums are supposed to be institutions for the care and safety of the afflicted who are irresponsible. It was topsy-turvydom, as the attendants could break the law with impunity, while the patients were held responsible for what was a phase of their affliction. One morning a patient struck another on the face, which was the only occurrence of the kind during my stay. It was
nothing deadly, but just one blow, and I could have laughed aloud when I saw how much was made of it by the attendants. The matron was informed when she paid her morning visit. There was a serious consultation, and no face was more grave than that of an attendant who had several times brutally assaulted patients. I left my seat and joined the group to see how the farce was to be played out. It was decided that the culprit was to be consigned to the strong room for the day, and she was taken and locked up. She was provided with no seat, and had none of the decencies of life. It was the duty of a working patient to act the part of strong-room scavenger when the occupant had been removed.

The patients got a bath once a week, and Monday was bath-day in this ward. It was always a dreadful day, as the patients were all excited through rough handling. To one poor little woman in particular it was a terrible ordeal, as it was a common occurrence for her to be dragged along the floor from the bathroom and stuck in a chair at the breakfast table in a dead faint or fit. The attendants thought it great fun, but they got a much-needed fright one day when they had great difficulty in bringing her round. She was one in whom there were great possibilities, and she was fast losing the faculty of her limbs though disuse. She never rose from her seat of her own accord, and at meal times she was rushed along the passage to the dining hall. Sometimes she was dragged by the hair and banged into her place, and I have seen her get such terrific slaps on the side of her head that the attendant was obliged to catch hold of her when the blow sent her reeling off her seat. She was often cruelly used when being put to bed, and one morning she appeared with a long, livid scar on her face. I asked what had caused it. She named an attendant and said she had done it with a shoe. She was a private patient and her brother, a minister, paid for this humane treatment. She was gentle, lovable, gave no trouble, and there was so little wrong in her case that she could have been cured by simple means. It may seem immense conceit to say so, but I think I could have cured her myself.

When the second doctor examined me physically and mentally soon after my entrance, I saw that I stood every test. For days afterwards I kept asking him how he had classed me, and he always replied that he hadn't classed me yet.

The tests applied suggested how I might counteract, to some extent, the evil influence of the place. I acted on the idea which is almost too simple to be believed, and at odd and unobserved moments experimented a little with some of the patients. I could not continue as there was no privacy, but I proved to my own satisfaction that it could be made an aid to the recovery of the curable.
It must be the experience of many who have placed mild cases in asylums to find the malady apparently increase after entry, while the reverse occurs regarding raving dementia. In the latter case the patients are simply put into a padded cell until the frenzy is exhausted. I have no hesitation in saying that signs of sanity or independence of thought were promptly repressed and discouraged. There was no will but that of the gaoler.

One day, two attendants were eating an orange, and a patient asked a share. They whispered together, then pretended they were to give it. When she went forward to receive it, they spat the pips in her face and shrieked with laughter. But it was a lunatic asylum.

A woman belonging to Peterhead, who was both a wife and a mother, was troublesome because she was suffering very much from toothache. She was thrown on her bed, undressed, and cruelly thrashed by one attendant while another looked on. I spoke to the one who did it, and asked if a thrashing was the latest asylum cure for toothache. The young termagant in a nurse’s uniform laughed quite unabashed.

There are societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, but human life ranks lower than the brute creation.

Recently a man was presented with a medal for rescuing a cat from a chimney stack. The cats can wait. They are credited with nine lives, and they can sit on the roof while immediate attention is given to the clamant need of suffering humanity.

Lord Rosebery is very much afraid of, and thinks he is in danger from the patients in the asylum in the vicinity of his home. The patients in lunatic asylums stand in much greater danger from Lord Rosebery and his compereers. The Government sits in judgment on slips of girls who kill their infants in the frenzy of pain, shame and despair, and under the cloak of the Government, all sorts of cold-blooded horrors are perpetrated in lunatic asylums.

A short time after my release a woman was what I may call officially murdered. No window in the asylum opened more than four or five inches. This poor woman managed to squeeze her head through such an aperture with the result that she was strangled. Murdered through neglect, and they actually called it suicide, and the case was not allowed to reach the ears of the public. It might have shaken confidence in this “admirably managed institution” as a City minister, the Rev. George Walker, designated it at the annual meeting of the managers of the Indigent Lunatic Fund.

There are humanely managed asylums, but they are as a drop in the ocean and the more’s the pity. From England, Scotland
and Wales, comes the same tale of wrong and cruel oppression, and the imprisoned are making desperate efforts to communicate with the outside world through the public Press. I can guess under what great difficulty. It is a blot upon our boasted humanity, and if the public allow shuffling or lethargy to hinder the crying need of reform, then we are a nation of callous barbarians.

Study the reasons given for the high statistics of insanity and you will find that they are manufactured reasons, and when this huge commercial bubble bursts they will vanish. The nation is advancing physically and mentally, and the statistics should be at a low ebb. We have widespread physical culture, improved sanitation, and most people are alive to the value of hygienic living, yet these statistics continue to insult modern science. Business competition is keen, but the working hours are always getting shorter and relaxation and amusement are the order of the day. Dr. Forbes Winslow, in a public paper, recently stated that he had been the means of procuring the freedom of many who, had there been no intervention, would have been inmates of asylums for their natural lives. All honour to him. He is a credit to his profession, and a public benefactor.

It is a hopeful sign that various members of the medical profession are publicly testifying to the idiotic blunders of their fellow practitioners.

I do not know if one is distinguished or disgraced by being denied protection under British rule, but that distinction belongs to me or that disgrace is mine.

It is against the law to sign a certificate on facts communicated by others. This was done in my case. Neither my husband nor any of my friends ever dreamt of putting me into an asylum. Forcible entrance was made into my home while I was peacefully employed there. I was kidnapped in broad daylight, in full public view, and no one dared interfere, because a police uniform was considered to be the garb of virtue. I was placed in the asylum on the representations of the Head Constable who had wronged me deeply, and in that wrong had committed a most daring fraud, one I think I can say with truth without parallel, and a fraud that could be only attempted and carried out by one in his position. Two detectives, James Dey and Alexander Clark, and two women named Masson took part in this little drama which was enacted in public, and at which I was personated on November 13th, 1907. No authentic knowledge of it reached me until January 6th, 1908, and then light was thrown on many puzzling experiences and confirmation set in strong. All inquiries regarding this fraud were buried, and the asylum was actually threatened if I didn't give up the idea that the Head Constable had wronged me. I sent him a few postcards plainly setting forth the fraud he had committed, and
because of this I was put into the asylum. When there were indications that the threat would be carried out, I wrote to the Superintendent, Scotland Yard, on March 15th, asking protection, and stating the fraud the Head Constable had committed and what he designed to do. In my letter I took notice of the fact that I had seen it estimated that the Government had spent about a thousand pounds in the search for a Russian girl supposed to be lost, and said surely a British woman would not seek protection in vain. There was no answer, and on March 18th I was consigned to the asylum.

A week after my incarceration my husband also wrote to Scotland Yard asking for assistance and an investigation, but no answer was returned. Appeals to magistrates and various local officials met with no success, and Dr. Reid, the medical superintendent, absolutely refused to release me though perfectly aware of my sanity. The fraud committed by Head Constable Anderson was pretended to be my delusion. I had imagined nothing, but had reliable information of it, and never would have dreamt that such a fraud could be successfully carried out in a city like Aberdeen, and we had asked a denial of it in writing, but this was refused.

Up till May, my husband and friends made strenuous but futile efforts to procure my release, and on May 7th a telegram was sent to the Home Secretary asking that the doctor be compelled to release me and for an investigation into the fraud. A reply was prepaid and the following reply came:

"The matter referred to in your telegram is receiving attention.

Under Secretary, Scottish Office."

Then, on May 12th, a letter was sent to the Home Secretary, and I contrived to write two letters to him, praying and beseeching aid. I know he received them because my own friends posted them. The Government has imprisoned nearly 400 women for political offences, but when a police official, who makes the most dangerous of all criminals, goes off the rails you will find that the Public Prosecutor has gone from home for an indefinite period without leaving any address. When a woman sins she has to take the consequences: when a man sins, Adam-like, he lays the burden on a woman if he can. Eve was a sinner: Adam was a coward—which is sometimes more contemptible than being a sinner—and quits can be cried.

The late Mr. Gladstone never did anything for Scotland, and the sort of service the present Mr. Gladstone is prepared to give—as representative of the Government—I think Scotland will repudiate. He talks of chivalry and the unsexing of women, and sanctions the lawless persecution of a woman to the danger of life and reason, to cover up the criminal acts of a subordinate, who-
remains in office—and such an office—receiving his salary in the dual rôle of constable and criminal.

On May 12th, which was Tuesday and a visiting day, my husband came to see me, and while we were in the waiting room Dr. Reid came in very angry demanding to know who had telegraphed to the Home Secretary. He said to my husband, "You are thwarting us, you know, and it won't do." A month after the telegram was sent Dr. McPherson, commissioner, came direct from Edinburgh to see me. The interview lasted one hour and a quarter. He never questioned my sanity, but went over the whole case, and shewed himself familiar with the most minute details and all its ramifications. On October 11th, 1905, my husband had preferred a charge at the police office against the two detectives already named, of prostitution of office by illegal threatening and intimidation, and one against a woman, Masson, of hiring the two men. These charges were insolently refused though they could be proved, and from this sprang a widely ramified intrigue which has to be known to be believed, and of which I was made the scapegoat. Dr. McPherson went over the same ground with my husband in an interview which took place in the office of Mr. C. B. Williams, Parish Council, who witnessed the interview. A fortnight later the doctor returned. The interview was short, and he asked me if I would write to anyone if I got out. I evaded the question, and said who would I write to when we had appealed in vain to the highest authority in the land. A week later we had a third interview, but I was not released and was never meant to be released until my spirit was broken or my mind destroyed.

Dr. McPherson’s verdict is still untold, though at the first interview he said he would report to the Secretary for Scotland and we would hear at once. Written and personal application for my release was ignored, and Dr. Reid sent a letter to my husband refusing to liberate me, though even had I been insane, he had no right to detain me.

A fortnight before my release I was taken to another ward, and in a few days was informed that I was to be transferred to the City District Asylum as my husband had refused to pay. When told this, I broke quite down under the hopelessness of my position, and, from sheer misery, wept all night, and was quite ill. At six o’clock in the morning which was Sunday, July 5th, a night attendant told me to get up. I refused, and said I was unable to lift my head. She tried to pull me out, but I resisted. Then she went swiftly round the bed, put her hands under my back, and threw me out with such force that I went under the next bed.

After some conversation with a day attendant who was quite near, she came and helped to lift me back into bed, and her apology
was a significant one. "I am very sorry," she said, "but I didn't know about you." On July 8th, the following letter was received:

Scottish Office, Whitehall, S.W.

19285/6. July 7th, 1908.

Sir,—With reference to your letter of the 12th May last, I am directed by the Secretary for Scotland to inform you that he has made inquiries, and sees no reason for thinking that Mrs. Coutts is otherwise than properly detained in Aberdeen Royal Asylum at present.

I am, Sir,

Your Obedient Servant,

REGINALD McLEOD.

Comment is needless.

Sometime before this, my husband engaged a solicitor to procure my release, and the solicitor foolishly sent me a letter with his name and address printed on the envelope. I received this letter with the flap loose and quite moist, and in a day or two he informed my husband that he could do nothing in the matter.

On July 11th I escaped, and the being taken back after nearly six hours liberty is one of the things that do not bear thinking about. The next day I was kept in a cell with double doors, where I was visited at intervals by Dr. Reid, who tried to bully me into signing a document, one clause of which was to the effect that I would write to no one about my supposed wrongs.

The following morning he came and said if he altered the document would I sign it. "I will sign nothing," I replied. I could have been free at any time during the four months had I agreed to the conditions, but I decided for the greatest good to the greatest number, and I am at liberty to seek aid for those who are debarred from appealing for help on their own behalf. When I forget those I left in such cruel bondage, I shall have forgotten the friends who stood by me in my hour of need.

I was set at liberty on July 14th only because a public petition for my release was mooted.

The reason I evaded Dr. McPherson's question was because I meant to write to Mr. Asquith, and after I was free, I wrote to him and asked if I was to receive any protection. As no answer came, a telegram was sent, with the same result. Then I considered it conclusively proved that the thing, by courtesy called the Government, had no existence when a mere British woman had need of it. I wrote to each member of the Asylum Board about
being assaulted, and asked for redress, not for my own satisfaction, but for the sake of those who were in the power of such women. One member, Mr. George Bisset, acknowledged receipt of it to my husband, and admitted that I had been illegally detained. When an account was sent a second time my husband wrote to the Board declining to pay, and stated that I was put into the asylum illegally, and assaulted. A reply came to the effect that the Board, without admitting the accuracy of the statements, resolved that payment should not be pressed for. If there are any in want of free board and lodgings, I confidently assure them they are to be had at the Aberdeen Royal Asylum.

I have unsuccessfully asked assistance from six Members of Parliament. I had great hopes of No. 6 because he was exposing lunacy scandals, and he was sufficiently interested to write and ask for a sight of the evidence, to which he would give careful attention. I forwarded per registered packet twelve documents and a long and clear statement connecting them. He was in difficulties with the Government and I knew I was putting a powerful weapon into his hand that could be used for personal ends, as the documents happened to prove that British administration of justice was beneath contempt, but I risked it. He kept the documents almost a fortnight, and I do not know if they were used to his own advantage, but his possession of them and the abandonment of the case against him synchronised. Mr. Winston Churchill in his elation at his success in Dundee, made use of an expression, which, in a manner became famous, "A thunder-bolt from the North." I can cap it with a thunder-bolt from farther North, which, when it opens the doors of these "Hells upon earth," will also, in just retribution, bring down the mighty from their seats.

Love of fair-play is considered to be inherent in, and one of the strongest characteristics of the British nation, and aliens from every land flock to Britain's shores, and find safety.

Britain casts an eye abroad, and rights many a wrong, and is proud of the part taken in the abolition of slavery.

Look nearer home, to the traffic in afflicted lives and the slavery firmly established, with this anomaly, that the seller pays the buyer, and the Government gives the stamp of approval. Asylums are being enlarged all over the country. This argues confidence in the high statistics being maintained, and it is for the public to say if this extension is to go on for the creation of office for a few individuals, and the consignment of thousands to a living grave.

Let the people rise in their might and extirpate this canker that is in their midst. The law as it stands does not protect those whom
God hath afflicted, and there is the greater law of our common humanity. If the brightest brains of the country can devise no certain cure for insanity, experiments can at least be made for the amelioration of this condition. Strong opposition will have to be faced, but the people pay, and can ignore asylum officialdom and the Government with its red tape and trammel-net of unwholesome self-complacency. There was never reform without opposition, and you will always find the opposition strongest when it means intrusion into private hunting grounds. Mr. John Burns would relegate women to the duties of the household, and here is a part of the national household urgently requiring to be set in order. Let the rescue work begin now. No need to wait to petition the repeal of Lunacy Law. Investigation will bring confirmation, the avalanche of public opinion the repeal.